The Memoirs of

PRINCE MAX OF BADEN

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PRINCE MAX OF BADEN

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PART III

CHAPTER I

ACCEPTANCE OF CHANCELLORSHIP AND ARMISTICE OFFER

I REACHED Berlin on 1st October at four o'clock in the morning.

At half past four I saw Herr von Haeften [1] at my quarters. As representative of the Supreme Command he made the following announcement :

Our military situation had become decidedly worse. On 29th September Headquarters had decided to appeal to President Wilson, accept his Fourteen Points, and request him to mediate an armistice.[2]

It was a long time before either of us could speak. Then I asked him : ' I cannot even have till November ? ' His answer was : ' No.' I said in that case I must decline ; my whole policy depended on our holding out till the end of the campaign. I had had no idea of the terrible situation we were in, nor for the matter of that had the outside world ; it would only learn the truth through our offer.

Haeften answered that it was absolutely necessary to give the tired army a rest ; and that it was confidently hoped President Wilson would at once take the mediation of an armistice in hand.

We drove to Herr von Payer's. He too felt the armistice offer a nightmare, but he spoke of it as if it were an unalterable fact. He summoned Major von der Bussche and asked him to explain the military situation to me.

Herr von der Bussche had been sent off by Headquarters on the 29th September with the special purpose of explaining

[1] Compare Extracts from the Report on his official activity in 1918, sent in to the Supreme Command at the end of 1918 : *Das Werk des Untersuchungsauschusses*, Vol. II., 1926, p. 374.

[2] Cf. *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 13, and Ludendorff, *op. cit.* p. 583 ff.

things to the politicians in Berlin. I give the substance of the report he presented :

During the last few days, he said, the situation had fundamentally changed. The collapse of the Bulgarian front had upset all our dispositions—troops destined for the Western front had had to be sent off there. At the same time on the Western front tremendous attacks had been launched. They had so far been beaten off, but their continuance must be reckoned with. Two factors had been decisive in bringing about this change for the worse :

1. The Tanks. They had been brought up in numbers which exceeded all expectation, and the surprise was often more than the nerves of the troops could stand.

2. The state of our Man-Power. The daily drafts were not even sufficient for a quiet winter campaign. In twenty-four hours the situation might change for the worse. Major von der Bussche concluded by reading a telephone message, which had been received that afternoon :

'General Headquarters,
1*st October*, 1918.[1]
1.30 p.m., received 2 p.m.

If by 7 or 8 o'clock this evening it is certain that Prince Max of Baden will form the Government, I agree to the postponement till to-morrow forenoon.

If, on the contrary, the formation of the Government should be in any way doubtful, I consider it desirable that the declaration should be issued to foreign Governments to-night.

(Signed) VON HINDENBURG.'

I objected to this pressure from the Supreme Command : If the situation were so serious as this, it could no longer be saved by an armistice offer, and we must simply risk the catastrophe ; a precipitate peace offer, above all a precipitate armistice offer—must have disastrous political consequences. I would not put my name to such an offer.

I at once betook myself to Herr von Berg, and informed him that I could not accept the Chancellorship. The armistice offer, I said, was a fatal mistake, and I would not sign

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 22

it. Herr von Berg replied: 'You were certainly not my candidate, but I have no other.'[1]

I answered him with some heat, that I did not shrink from the sacrifice, but it must not be a senseless sacrifice, which it would be if my first step as Chancellor was to be an appeal to the enemy. I reproached him as the Kaiser's closest adviser for my not having been summoned till after matters had reached this state of bankruptcy; I was now to throw away my good name and my reputation to save anything that could still be saved. No man ought to be put in such a position, and no nation either.

Herr von Berg broke in: 'You see, you are already getting nervy!'

I replied I had good reason to get excited over the news with which I had been faced on my arrival. In any case I was not in a position to accept the Chancellorship without the assent of the Grand Duke of Baden, and he would under the circumstances have to be approached through the Kaiser.

Major von der Bussche interrupted our conversation in order to repeat to Herr von Berg the Supreme Command's telephone message, and to urge the speedy formation of the Government. He brushed aside Berg's objection that it was technically impossible to put the Kaiser and the Grand Duke of Baden into communication before morning. He evidently suspected ill-will. I left the two gentlemen engaged in a heated exchange of words.

Before going back to Herr von Payer's, I spent a long time walking up and down the Wilhelmstrasse with Haeften. I informed the representative of the Supreme Command that I could only undertake the Chancellorship if General Ludendorff left me a free hand as regards political action. An armistice offer made any such peace step as I had contemplated impossible. I begged him to get General Ludendorff to change his mind. I must at least demand a fortnight to prepare the political ground at home and abroad.

[1] Twice in the course of the next few days I again received the same answer, on repeating to Herr von Berg that I should refuse to take over the Chancellorship, encumbered as it was with the armistice offer.

Haeften was like a changed man, his old brisk confidence gone. He was all the time fighting out an inner struggle between discipline and his better judgment, and he almost broke down under it. For a moment I thought he would shake himself free and stand up to Ludendorff. But then he sank again into gloom and said almost as if repeating a formula : The army needs rest, the armistice offer must be issued at once. I appealed to him to put himself in my place. My signature of the petition to Wilson would prejudice my future as a Federal Prince to an intolerable degree. Haeften's answer was : ' Your Highness is not only heir to the throne of Baden, but also a General in the Prussian Army, whose fortunes are now at stake.'

At Payer's we found Hintze and Roedern. Presently Major von der Bussche once more appeared, to speed things up. His remarks to Col. von Haeften on the dawdling of the civilians were decidedly ill-tempered : What these gentlemen needed, he said, was the iron fist on their necks.

The opinion held by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was, that now General Headquarters had decided, on 29th September, to send the offer to Wilson, the only thing to do was to carry that decision out. He had brought with him a draft note.

In reply to this I contended that it was both the right and the duty of the new Government to satisfy itself of the necessity of an offer which it would have to cover with its name.

Herr von Payer agreed with me on the constitutional point, but regarded it in actual fact impossible to take responsibility for delay.

For a moment I was tempted to see a way out in the proposal that the retiring Government should sign the offer. Herr von Payer feared that the offer would be shorn of all effect, unless it were made by a new man without commitments ; but he added words which put me to shame : ' In the last resort, I would do it myself ; I would sacrifice my good name to the army, and then at once resign.'

I saw that there were only two courses open to me : either

to leave Berlin or to attempt to form a Government and carry on the fight against the peace offer at the same time. It was clear to me that my departure would result in an immediate signature of the offer by Herr von Payer.

I decided to remain. It is true I did not yet know how far Herr von Hintze had gone in the carrying out of his instructions: During the night of 29th-30th September the Foreign Office had informed Vienna and Constantinople of the decision taken at Spa.[1]

Herr von Haeften accompanied me to my quarters. I felt more and more strongly that he was only carrying out orders; at heart he could not but be on my side—we two had fought long enough shoulder to shoulder against every political action that was inspired either by Hybris or by Depression. I made it clear to Col. von Haeften that I would take the responsibility of waiting and seeing whether we were beaten in the field. That would in any case be better than to beg the enemy for an armistice now.

Herr von Haeften promised to inform General Ludendorff of my views the same night.

At 11 o'clock in the evening I heard Haussmann had telephoned that people were speaking of a 'race with Bulgaria.'[2] 'That,' he said, 'would surely be the limit of madness.'

As soon as I was alone I had a feeling of being suddenly freed from the pressure put on us by the messages of the Supreme Command. I felt quite certain that the tempestuous energy with which General Ludendorff was trying to put the decision of the 29th September into effect, ought not to blind one to the fact that this decision itself could only have been due to his mind being momentarily clouded. Did General Ludendorff really think he was in a position to order about Foch and Wilson, as he was now claiming to order the Berlin Government about?

The peace offer of December 1916, the July resolution, Kuehlmann's speech—every official peace feeler up to now

[1] Cf. *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 14.

[2] Bulgaria had asked for an armistice on 26th September, the armistice was signed in the night of 29th September.

had horrified the Supreme Command, because peace feelers ' strengthened the enemy morale and weakened ours.'

If that was true, then the projected cry of distress must result in our million army throwing down its arms while the enemy pack dashed triumphantly in to the kill.[1]

To be sure, I had nursed illusions before I came to Berlin. Alsace—which I still thought could be saved—was now, according to all human calculation, lost—perhaps more than Alsace. But the most recent reports from the army made it clear that even now the enemy infantry were not putting forth their maximum effort to make the most of the advantages they had won. I trusted in myself and in my programme to paralyze still further the enemy's offensive spirit, and one could always in the last resort officially accept the Fourteen Points, provided that the levee en masse were proclaimed at the same time.

The clearer my ideas became, the firmer became my belief that it could not yet be too late to reverse the decision. If I only held out for three or four days, and if meantime no catastrophe intervened, even General Ludendorff would once more think of his own principles and scorn to beg a pitiless enemy for mercy. I placed my hopes on the Kaiser and the Field-Marshal, both of whom were expected next day.

I thought of conducting my struggle against the armistice offer on three lines of argument :

1. Our situation is not such as to justify this act of despair.
2. The projected offer makes our situation worse.
3. There is another and better way.

On 2nd October at 7 a.m. Hahn at my desire rang up his chief, Haeften, in order once more to marshal the reasons against the plan.

He spoke of the weaknesses in the enemy position, the industrial unrest in England, the absolute determination of the English to have done with the war this year, and the longing for peace which would inevitably break out in England if we only held out till the end of the campaign.

[1] Just imagine how the Supreme Command would have treated Herr von Bethmann, had *he* made such a proposal !

He reminded Col. von Haeften how pessimism had once before given birth to a fatal decision, in January 1917, when the Supreme Command, in the expectation of a general offensive by the Entente—which never came—forced through the intensified submarine war. He told him that all hopes in Wilson were illusory and concluded with the words : ' This plan means a Jena—in other words, the white flag.'

Haeften answered : ' You do not know the military situation,' and added : ' Wilson's vanity will make him undertake the mediation of peace.'

I decided to call Max Warburg to my aid in order to combat the illusion that America would show itself conciliatory if only we humiliated ourselves. Warburg, as one of our best experts on America, had often been consulted by our military and political authorities.

Haeften called on me at 8 o'clock in the morning. He reported on his negotiations with Ludendorff : He had called the General to the telephone at midnight [1] and had argued with him for an hour and a half. Above all he had pleaded for delay, dwelling on the technical difficulties involved in the formation of the Government. General Ludendorff again and again cut him short with the words : ' I want to save my army.' The commander in the field thought only of his worn-out and dwindling troops, and he was possessed by a conviction that the enemy would grant the respite he asked for ; then he hoped to be able to fight on again and avert the worst.

During the conversation Ludendorff received the news that communication between the Kaiser and the Grand Duke had been established [2] and that the Grand Duke had given the desired consent. General Ludendorff requested Haeften to awaken me in the middle of the night and get me to sign. Haeften did not carry out the order that night. But he now laid before me the telegrams which had been exchanged between the Kaiser and the Grand Duke of Baden :

[1] Cf. Ludendorff, *Erinnerungen*, p. 588 f.

[2] Thanks to the efforts of the General Staff to ' speed up Prince Max's appointment ' (Ludendorff, *op. cit.* p. 588). Cf. Payer, *op. cit.* p. 100 f.

'To His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Baden.

KARLSRUHE,
1st October, 1918.

In this fateful hour of our Fatherland's direst need, in which we are compelled by the dwindling numbers of our reserves and reinforcements to make a peace which is not warranted by the victories we have won, I beg you to give Prince Max your permission to take office as Imperial Chancellor. I know that I am asking a heavy sacrifice of you, but beg you to make it in the interest of our Fatherland as a whole, as Max too is ready to make it. I must ask you for an immediate decision, for a peace offer from us is demanded by the situation, and must bear the signature of the new Chancellor.

En route for the New Palace.'

The Grand Duke replied :

'Hearty thanks for your telegram, which affects me deeply. I cannot understand why it must be Max who must cover such an offer with his name ; if this is inevitable, it is my patriotic duty not to oppose it. Max himself has not yet asked for my consent.

My most loyal wishes go with you in these fateful decisions.'

Haeften urged on me that as an officer I could not refuse to make the sacrifice which the army demanded of me.

I interrupted our conversation to receive Ebert, whom I had asked to visit me. I made no reference to the Headquarters' decision and found to my satisfaction that *he* was not contemplating any desperate measures. He was, it is true, impressed with the greatness of our danger, but his bearing showed no trace of nervousness. I explained to him that I was an opponent of peace offers, but stood for precise and public definition of our war aims. He made no objection.

I said to Ebert, that I would form no Government which did not include the Social Democrats. He was relieved at my rejecting a Coalition Ministry, on the ground that a Government based on the Majority needed the opposition of the Right. Ebert spoke of the sacrifice which his party would be making by sharing the responsibility of government at such a time. But I at once felt there was no doubt that he would demand and exact this sacrifice.

Ebert did not disappoint me. At one of the party meetings which took place that day, he declared that it was the duty of the party to put its forces unreservedly at the disposal of the German people in these days of momentous decisions; and he carried the day against Scheidemann, who uttered a warning against going into a 'bankrupt concern.'[1]

Shortly after 9 a.m. Herr von Payer assembled the leaders of the parties, to hear a report on the military situation by Major von der Bussche, the representative of the Supreme Command.[2] I knew nothing of this function. All the parliamentary groups were represented. Herr von Payer thought it well to adopt this method of intercepting the blow whose overwhelming force would otherwise break the back of the German people's resistance.

There was no lack of improving phrases in the lecture which Major von der Bussche delivered:[3]

> 'Army and home front must not betray any weakness; the enemy must be brought face to face with an unbroken home front and an inflexible will to continue the war in case he refuses peace or offers only a humiliating peace.'

But what was the worth of such phrases in face of his announcement that

> The Supreme Command had seen fit to propose to His Majesty that an attempt be made to break off the battle, and the decision had had to be made to give up the war as hopeless. Every twenty-four hours might make matters worse and lead the enemy to discover our real weakness.

Witnesses afterwards described to me the impression he made. The members were completely crushed; Ebert went white as death and could not utter a word; Stresemann looked as if he had been struck; Count Westarp alone rose up in protest against the unreserved acceptance of the Fourteen Points. The Prussian Minister von Waldow is said to have left the room with the words: There is only

[1] Cf. Scheidemann, *Der Zusammenbruch*, Berlin, 1921, p. 174 ff.

[2] Cf. Payer, *op. cit.* p. 101 ff., Ludendorff, *Kriegserinnerungen*, p. 585 ff.

[3] Printed in Ludendorff, *Urkunden*, p. 535 ff.

one thing left now, and that is to put a bullet through one's head.

Seyda, the Pole, and Haase, the Independent, were present at the lecture. Haeften was not allowed to be present, but had waited outside in the antechamber. Seyda came out first, his face beaming. Haase rushed up to Ledebour with the words : ' Now we've got them ! ' [1]

Thus the envoy of the Supreme Command, without intending it, dealt my plan a mortal blow.[2] Up to this moment the home front had stood unbroken. It had been held together by the overwhelming force of suggestion, which went out from the two commanders in the field—the suggestion : ' You must hold out ! Don't give in ! '—Now the spark of panic leapt across to the people at home. I was to feel its effects in my negotiations with the party leaders.

In the course of the morning I went to see the Vice-Chancellor at the Ministry of the Interior. There I was put into telephone communication with the Grand Duke. I had to hear words of anxious foreboding ; the Grand Duke hated the idea of a Prince of Baden being entrusted with the liquidation of a lost war. He warned me of the ill consequences to myself and to our house. I could only reply that I was convinced the sacrifice must be made.

Later I received the Reichstag deputies Fischbeck and Stresemann. Stresemann was painfully surprised by my statement that I needed him and his party in Opposition, not in the Government.

I thought the time had now come to inform Herr von Payer as to whom I did and did not desire to have as my colleagues. But here, too, I found I was to be confronted with accomplished facts.[3] Kardorff, the Free Conservative, appeared in the present situation to be no longer a possible Head of the Chancellery. Payer considered Erzberger

[1] Cf. Haeften's Report, *op. cit.* p. 376.

[2] Shortly afterwards Ludendorff himself allowed that he had committed a grave mistake in not being in Berlin at the time. Cf. Haeften's Report, *op. cit.* p. 377 ; also Ludendorff, *Das Friedens- und Waffenstillstandsangebot*, Berlin, 1919, p. 44.

[3] Cf. Payer, *op. cit.* p. 104 ff.

inevitable ; Haussmann had not been nominated by his own party, and moreover Social Democrats and Centre would object to the Progressive People's Party having any further representation in the Government, which would be out of proportion to their numerical strength. The Vice-Chancellor promised me to make still one more attempt to secure me Ebert instead of Scheidemann, but he had little hope of success ; the parties had already decided whom to send.

Such was the bitter fruit of the Kaiser's plan of putting the formation of the Government in the hands of the retiring Chancellor and not of his newly-appointed successor.

When I returned to my quarters I met Max Warburg. He had already heard of the terrible demand which was being made of me and was convinced that if we took this road we were lost. I must not accept. It meant crippling the new Chancellor in advance. ' If the soldiers see the situation in that light, then you ought to let them cross the lines with the white flag themselves.' I ought not, he said, to allow myself to be misused, the day would come when the responsibility would be fastened on me.

I replied that direct dealing between army and army was equivalent to capitulation in the field. We had not come to that yet.

The conversation I had arranged between Warburg and Haeften took place in my presence. Warburg described the Americans as he knew them in his business experience. The best Americans, he said, were gentlemen, with a sense of responsibility, but there were also the self-opinionated formalists who knew nothing of Europe. If we humiliated ourselves now, not the good type but the other one would be master of the situation. ' In that case Wilson will not be able to maintain himself against the party machines. Mark my words, he will demand the German Republic ! '

In conclusion he said : ' It strikes me as odd that to-day I, a civilian, should be appealing to the soldiers to fight on. My only son, who is now undergoing his training, will be in the trenches within a month ; all the same I implore you not to give in now.'

But Haeften fell back on the formula which at that time seemed to obsess the military mind : ' The army needs rest.'

In the early afternoon I spoke to Count Westarp. The Conservatives had that morning declared their readiness to accept the Imperial decree of 30th September, and even at a sacrifice of their convictions to take part in a Government which made it its task to muster up the whole forces of the people for the honourable conclusion of the war on a united front. I was more convinced than ever that the Right must remain outside at this juncture. If there were no Labour representatives in the Government, a summons to National Defence would awaken no echo among the masses, and the Social Democrats would not under any circumstances work with the Conservatives. The effect abroad was an even more important consideration. The impression of weakness and insincerity would be strengthened if the adherents of a peace of annexation suddenly adopted the principles of President Wilson.

Count Westarp answered : It went without saying that his party would fulfil its duty to the country in the future as in the past. The fact that everybody knew this to be true of the Conservatives and their supporters naturally made it easy to treat them as a negligible quantity. This had happened time and again. They were well aware of this weakness in their tactical position, but that could not prevent them from continuing to venture everything in the defence of the Fatherland.

There was a certain inconsistency in the resentment thus expressed, for Count Westarp had himself uttered a warning in the *Kreuzzeitung* of 29th September against the ' disastrous effect it would have *at home and abroad* ' were the Conservatives now to renounce ' Securities in Belgium or War Indemnities.'

The Field-Marshal had arrived. Our first conference took place in Herr von Payer's room about 3 o'clock.[1] Herr von

[1] Count Westarp, *Die Regierung des Prinzen Max von Baden und die konservative Partei, Beiträge zu konservativer Politik und Weltanschauung*, No. 1, p. 11.

Hintze, Count Roedern, Herr von Berg and others were present.

As the Field-Marshal with his air of unruffled assurance entered the room, my hope that he would in the end take my side was strengthened. His tone was calm, unlike that of General Ludendorff's messages. In fact, however, his position was the same as Ludendorff's. I made repeated attempts to draw from this or that optimistically-coloured expression of Hindenburg's the political conclusion that the new Government should be given time to present itself to the world and to Germany, to frame a home policy and to declare its war aims. ' Give me a breathing space of ten, eight, even four days, before I have to appeal to the enemy.'

But I kept receiving the same answer : ' The gravity of the military situation admits of no delay.'

While the Secretaries of State and the Vice-Chancellor were discussing I took the opportunity of speaking to Hindenburg for a moment alone. I begged him to tell me whether the military situation really made such precipitate action necessary.

I received the answer : ' We have so far survived this attack ; I am expecting a new mass attack within a week, and I cannot undertake to guarantee that there will not be a catastrophe.' At the word ' catastrophe ' he corrected himself ; the words he then used were in substance ' or at least the most serious consequences.'

The meeting was interrupted because the Kaiser desired to hold a short Crown Council. On our way to the Chancellery I told Col. von Haeften that I would not issue the armistice offer. It had struck Haeften, too, that the Field-Marshal took a calmer view of the situation than General Ludendorff. I begged him to telephone at once to Spa.

After Haeften had left me on the steps of the Chancellery, he met Count Hertling. They exchanged a few words :

' What do you think of the situation ? '

Haeften answered : ' I think it absolutely disastrous.'

' I think it was an excellent idea of Herr von Hintze's to make the peace offer to Wilson.'

'But, Your Excellency, what is to happen if Wilson demands the abdication of the Kaiser?'

'The Kaiser asked me that very question last Sunday, and I replied: "Your Majesty, I do not believe that he will, but if the demand is made, then we will simply start fighting again."'

Haeften asked whether in that case a single soldier would still put his finger to the trigger.

Hertling parried with: 'You seem to me to take too black a view of things.'[1]

The Crown Council began about 6 o'clock. The Kaiser was apparently in a good temper as he entered the room. He greeted those present with the question: 'What a state of nerves Berlin is in, to be sure!'

When it came to my turn to speak, I knew that the decision must go in favour of the armistice offer, unless I at once succeeded in winning over the Kaiser to my side; so I began with the statement: 'I am opposed to the offer being made.' His Majesty interrupted me: 'The Supreme Command considers it necessary; and you have not been brought here to make difficulties for the Supreme Command.'[2] The whole discussion was purely formal.

Haeften had meantime got through to General Ludendorff on the telephone and had begged him to give me at least until after the first meeting of the Reichstag. Such precipitate action would have disastrous effects at home. The Field-Marshal's view, he said, seemed by no means so pessimistic.

Ludendorff answered: 'The Field-Marshal may be right; to-day there is no immediate danger; but who can guarantee that there are no big attacks coming? In that case four days are immensely important.'

[1] Cf. Payer, *op. cit.* p. 106 ff.

[2] From 1st-5th October Col. von Haeften was with me almost continuously. After my appointment, he became together with Col. von Winterfeld representative of the Supreme Command attached to the Imperial Chancellor. I have on several occasions given accounts of events of which Haeften was an eye-witness, but at which I myself was not present. Such accounts are based on the verbal descriptions given me by Haeften personally between 1st October and 9th November.

The note was to be discussed in Herr von Payer's room in the evening. Herr von Hintze, Count Roedern and representatives of the Foreign Office were present, as well as Solf, who had been summoned at my request, because I knew that he too looked on the offer as calamitous.

Herr von Hintze read out the draft which he had prepared. Solf objected to its being addressed only to Wilson. The President had always declined separate action and could parry our offer with a declaration that Germany was trying to divide America from the Allies. Solf's view won general acceptance, and Hintze agreed to make a change in the text.

I now once more made a counter-proposal. Let me, two days after my appointment, make a big speech in the Reichstag outlining my programme ; let me introduce the new ministry, treat Wilson's last speech as an approach and answer it with a German peace offer, containing concrete conditions and addressed to all the powers.

I met with opposition on all sides. Count Roedern and Herr von Hintze were still entirely under the spell of their experiences in Spa and felt themselves personally responsible for seeing the decisions of 29th September carried into effect. They pressed me with the question : How can you take the responsibility of going against the considered view of the Supreme Command, and hold up the necessary political consequences of our military situation ?

Herr von Payer, too,[1] had given up all opposition to the offer ; he merely urged that it must be the new Government that must sign it.

The Prussian Government had already given its assent.

Thus, with the exception of Solf, I had the whole of the retiring Government against me. I determined to have another private conversation with the Field-Marshal next morning.

The military report on the night of 2nd-3rd October was not unfavourable ; Haeften reckoned that as a consequence of their heavy losses in men and material, especially in tanks,

[1] Cf. Payer, *op. cit.* p. 107.

it would be ten days at least before the enemy was in a position to undertake a new attempt to break through on a large scale.

My meeting with the Field-Marshal took place at 9 a.m. at the General Staff Buildings. I had summarized my scruples in a ' verbal note ' which I read out to him. In it I insisted that

> ' An immediate armistice offer would be ineffective and dangerous.
>
> All over the world it would be treated as a confession of German defeat.
>
> It would strengthen the jingoes in enemy countries to such an extent that Wilson would be powerless against them.
>
> All the favourable effects of the new Government in furthering the cause of peace would be lost in the sensation which the offer would make.'

I then proposed the following method :

> ' No diplomatic note to be dispatched, but in my first speech on entering office I would proclaim :
>
> A detailed programme of war aims in " close, but not undignified correspondence " with Wilson's Points ;
>
> That I should request all belligerent Governments to negotiate on this basis.'

A speech, I pointed out, could determine the psychological effect of such an offer far better than a diplomatic note.

The statement I read closed with the words :

> ' I am willing to give my consent to the immediate dispatch of a note—and then not to Wilson alone, but to all the enemy Powers—only on the condition, that the Supreme Command states in writing—so that I may be in the position to communicate their statement to the Cabinet to-day, and eventually to publish it—that the military situation on the Western front no longer admits of a postponement of the dispatch of the note till my speech is made—or rather till it reaches enemy countries on Saturday, 5th October. But in doing so the Supreme Command is only to express its opinion on the military situation—the question as to which step is the more effective, the public speech or the note from Government to Government, is not a matter of military competence.'

The reply which I received was the following letter from the Field-Marshal, of 3rd October. I have often been asked questions as to its occasion and its purpose.

'BERLIN,
3rd October, 1918.[1]

The Supreme Command insists on its demand of Sunday, 29th September, that a peace offer to our enemies be issued at once.[2]

As a result of the collapse of the Macedonian front and the weakening of our Western reserves which this has brought about, and now that it is impossible to make good the very considerable losses which have been incurred in the battles of the last few days, there is, so far as can be foreseen, no longer a prospect of forcing peace on the enemy.

The enemy, on the other hand, is continually bringing new and fresh reserves into the battle.

The German army still stands firm and successfully wards off all attacks. *But the situation becomes daily more critical and may force the Supreme Command to take momentous decisions.*[2]

It is desirable in the circumstances to break off the battle in order to spare the German people and its allies useless sacrifices. *Every day wasted costs thousands of brave soldiers their lives.*[2]

(Signed) VON HINDENBURG
Field-Marshal.'

The essence of it all was : *The battle must be broken off.* This was in fact the conclusion in which all our negotiations culminated—that, unless the armistice came, the Supreme Command gave us up for lost.

On the forenoon of 3rd October I went to the Reichstag, where the Presidential Committee were introduced to me. I drew Scheidemann into conversation and sounded him as to whether I could still expect help from Parliament in securing at least a postponement of the offer. But the parliamentarians had already bowed to the authority of the Supreme Command.

Scheidemann saw in the armistice offer the end of the war :

'For goodness sake let us put a stop to the bloodshed!' he said.

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 33, where above letter is erroneously described as an answer to the Questionnaire given on p. 349 ff.

[2] My italics.

I made a fresh attempt. On the afternoon of 3rd October one more conference was to be held with the Field-Marshal. At 2 o'clock I sent him the following questionnaire :

'BERLIN,
Urgent. *3rd October*, 1918.

Before I come to a decision with regard to the peace step desired by the Supreme Command, I have the honour to request Your Excellency for an expression of opinion on the following questions :

1. How much longer can the army hold the enemy beyond the frontiers ?
2. Is the Supreme Command bound to anticipate a military collapse, and if so, within what period ? Would such collapse mean the end of our power of military resistance ?
3. Is the military situation so critical, that steps must be at once taken to secure an armistice and peace ?
4. In case the answer to 3 is in the affirmative, is the Supreme Command aware that the initiation of a peace step under the pressure of the military situation may lead to the loss of German colonies and German territory, in particular of Alsace-Lorraine and the purely Polish districts of the Eastern provinces ?
5. Does the Supreme Command agree to the dispatch of the enclosed draft ?

I should be grateful to Your Excellency for an immediate answer.'

My hope of a convincing reply was not fulfilled. The answers were read out at the conference [1] and were confined to mere generalities. Optimistic expressions stood side by side with phrases which sounded very grave indeed :

Whether the front could still hold out, whether a break-through was to be feared, would appear to depend on many different factors, especially on the forces which the enemy might bring up, and on our own staying-power. By obstinately holding on to the ground, by a preventive contraction of the front, a general collapse might be averted ; in which case there was room for hope that German territory could be protected till the spring.

[1] Ludendorff (*Urkunden*, p. 540 ff.) gives the answers above referred to, as well as the reports from Haeften and Bussche upon the events of 3rd October. Cf. also Payer, *op. cit.* p. 109 ff.

The Supreme Command would in the last resort consider surrendering some small French-speaking portions of Alsace-Lorraine ; the cession of German territory in the East is for it quite out of the question.

The prevailing tone was always the same : " The situation is daily growing more critical and may force the Supreme Command to take momentous decisions." '

The demand for the issue of the offer was maintained, but the words in which the Field-Marshal expounded the answer which had been prepared contained nothing to justify this frantic haste. On the contrary, they strengthened the impression that for the moment the danger was past.

Accordingly I once more demanded a postponement of the offer, until the Government had presented itself to the Reichstag and announced its aims. Then we would await the effect made by the new men and their programme. If the echo in enemy countries were favourable, the offer could then follow—it would then be less of a confession of military weakness. This would only necessitate a delay of a few days.

The Field-Marshal seemed for a moment disposed to agree to my proposal. But when Herr von Hintze insisted on rapid action, he decided for him.

After the conference I commissioned Haeften to call up General Ludendorff in my name and make him a final proposal—the peace offer to be issued at once, but not to be coupled with a request for armistice.

Haeften pointed out to the General that the Field-Marshal had once again painted the military situation in less gloomy colours than Major von der Bussche. General Ludendorff replied, as he had done on the preceding day : ' The Field-Marshal is doubtless right in his estimate of the situation, but all the same I must insist on the armistice offer and its speediest possible dispatch. Even if the situation is not at the moment threatening, still a repetition of the Entente mass attacks on the whole front is certainly to be expected before long. And in that case—in two or three weeks' time —it might be decisive for the German Army to secure the respite it so sorely needed twenty-four hours earlier.' [1]

[1] Cf. Haeften's Report, *op. cit.* p. 378.

Towards evening the final form of the note was decided upon. I signed it and was appointed Chancellor the same day.

I have often been asked the question why I put my name to it. My answer is :

The battle against the offer was lost. It would have been sent off, even had I refused.

In that case it would have borne the signature of Hindenburg or Payer. For the soldiers to ask for armistice meant capitulation. Even Payer's name could not disguise the straits we were in, since the Vice-Chancellor had just spoken publicly against Wilson's programme.[1]

The appearance of spontaneity must be kept up before our own people, even if the "camouflage" only lasted twenty-four hours. Only a new Chancellor was fitted to take the responsibility for the fatal step before Germany and before the world, and even to give the impression that his political initiative, and not that of the Supreme Command, lay behind the note.

If the offer could no longer be delayed, then at least everything must be done to prevent its rejection. The main thing was to call the friends of peace in the allied countries out into the open.

I was pressed on all sides to lend my name, because my speeches and my activity on behalf of the prisoners gave some guarantee of an echo abroad. It seemed to me cowardly to break things off after being once called in and finding a situation far worse than I had expected. I had to admit that on my lips Germany's adhesion to a just peace would not simply be taken as a cry of despair.'

Shortly before accepting the office of Chancellor, I had a conversation with another Badener, and he implored me on dynastic grounds to decline : ' If collapse and revolution come, what will become of you ? ' I answered : ' In that case I go under with the rest ; to-day, when Germany and the Kaiser are in extreme danger, and there is a faint glimmer of hope of my being able to do something to save them, I cannot possibly think of myself and my own future.'

[1] In a speech delivered on 12th September, 1918, at Stuttgart.

Our offer was sent out in the night of 3rd-4th October.

'BERLIN,
3rd October, 1918.[1]

The German Government requests the President of the United States of America to take in hand the restoration of peace, to bring this request to the notice of all belligerent states and to invite them to send plenipotentiaries for the initiation of negotiations. They accept as a basis for the peace negotiations the programme laid down by the President of the United States of America, in his message to Congress of 8th January, 1918[2] and in his subsequent announcements, particularly in his speech of 27th September, 1918.[3]

To avoid further bloodshed, the German Government requests the President to arrange the immediate conclusion of an armistice on land, by sea and in the air.

(Signed) MAX, PRINCE OF BADEN.
Imperial Chancellor.'

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 34.

[2] For the text of the Fourteen Points, *vide infra*, p. 25 n.

[3] Speech on the occasion of the Fourth Liberty Loan, 1918.

CHAPTER II

SUBMISSION TO THE FOURTEEN POINTS; THE SPEECH OF 5TH OCTOBER.

The Imperial Cabinet

When I woke up on the morning of the fourth I felt like a man who has been condemned to death, and has forgotten it in his sleep.

Our note contained a double humiliation for us: first the demand for an armistice—that was unavoidable—and then, too, the acceptance of the Wilson programme without reservation.[1] Only a nation which has been beaten to the ground, is compelled to accept the full demands of the enemy without reservation or comment.

Then at the last moment I thought I saw a way out. To-morrow I would make a speech in which I would

[1] The Supreme Command had probably no clear idea at first as to the fateful conditions to which the Fourteen Points must in any case commit Germany. They probably saw in Wilson's programme a mere collection of phrases, which a skilful diplomacy would be able to interpret at the conference table in a sense favourable to Germany. I had put them the question whether the Supreme Command were aware that the course they were entering upon might lead to the loss of colonies and even of German soil—in particular of Alsace-Lorraine and of the purely Polish districts of our Eastern provinces. I received from them the evasive reply: 'The Supreme Command is ready to consider the cession of some small French-speaking parts of Alsace-Lorraine, if that is unavoidable. The cession of German territory on the Eastern frontier is for them out of the question' (*Amtliche Urkunden*, p. 72, note). At the last moment the Supreme Command tried to give expression to this mental reservation of theirs, in the wording which they proposed for our note: 'The German Government agrees that Wilson's Fourteen Points shall "serve as the basis of conversations"' (*Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 29). But the Ministers were—from their point of view rightly—of the opinion that no formulation should be used which would make Wilson suspicious and might provoke inconvenient questions. They supposed that they had avoided this in the final wording of the note; as it afterwards appeared, they underrated the alertness of our opponents.

interpret Wilson's conditions; without straining their meaning, I would stubbornly defend point by point our rights, which Wilson had at least promised to respect.

I had in any case intended in the course of the day to receive Geheimrat Simons and offer him the office of Secretary of the Chancellery. Now I sent him a message that I should like to see him as soon as possible. Simons was at that time a legal expert in the Foreign Office. I did not know him personally, but for years I had been hearing of him and of his attitude to the war, to our invasion of Belgium, to the enemy blockade, to the submarine war, to the question of war guilt. His patriotism caused him to suffer deeply wherever he thought that his country had acted unjustly; on the other hand he felt it a great wrong for Germany to submit to injustice and calumny without a struggle. He was an excellent lawyer; his subtlety did not spend itself on dialectics, but was restrained by his love of justice, to which he was thus able to give triumphant expression.

I found Simons greatly depressed, even reproachful. He spoke at once of the armistice offer with the precision which always characterized his speech and his writing alike. He felt that all was lost. I begged him to help me to save what could be saved. He hesitated to accept the office which I offered him, and asked for time to think it over, but he was ready at once to help me with the speech in which I proposed to fill out in precise terms the frame-work of the Fourteen Points.

The German people, said Simons, must know exactly what the Fourteen Points mean—we cannot let it be led blindfold to the conference table; the enemy must know that we are ready to go so far and no further.

We went through the Fourteen Points:[1] most of them were evidently levelled against Germany, but the principle

[1] The Fourteen Points were as follows:

I. Open convenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in public view.

II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in

of Justice which they proclaimed, was to us not only a threat, but also a promise of protection against the reckless claims of the Allies which were already cropping up. We had once and for all to put down our foot against a Polish Danzig, against the forcible separation of Alsace-Lorraine, against the theft of our colonies, against one-sided disarmament. The prophet of the League of Nations and of the ' open covenants ' had to be warned of the secret agreements of his allies, and of their plans for continuing the war against us in peace-time.

As a Fifteenth Point I personally wanted to demand an impartial investigation of the question of war guilt.

Geheimrat Simons convinced me that we should be ill advised to demand autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine in our discussion of the Eighth Point. After having accepted the

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whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers, and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.

IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. A free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the Government whose title is to be determined.

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest co-operation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy, and assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing, and more than a welcome, assistance also of every kind that she may need and may herself desire. The treatment accorded Russia by her sister nations in the months to come will be the acid test of their goodwill, of their comprehension of her needs as distinguished from their own interests, and of their intelligent and unselfish sympathy.

VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No other single act will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they have themselves set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act the whole structure and validity of international law is forever impaired.

VIII. All French territory should be freed, and the invaded portions

Wilson programme our one hope lay in the referendum. We should gain the sympathies of the Alsatians if we were the first to open the question of referendum. At the same time we decided not to answer Point Thirteen—Wilson's demand that Poland should have a free and secure outlet to the Sea—with a simple negative, but to propose a solution which should make economic concessions to Poland without impairing our sovereignty over territory which had been German for centuries.

I left Simons with the words :

' I will make a speech which will make good the humiliation of last night, and show the enemy that we have still some breath left.'

Then I entrusted Simons and Hahn with the task of composing the speech, and told them to make use of the expert advice of Solf, Warburg, Haussmann and Haeften.

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restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly 50 years, should be righted in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

X. The peoples of Austro-Hungary whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured should be accorded the first opportunity of autonomous development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia and Montenegro should be evacuated ; occupied territories restored ; Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea ; and the relations of the several Balkan States to one another determined by friendly counsel along historically established lines of allegiance and nationality ; and international guarantees of the political and economic independence and territorial integrity of the several Balkan States should be entered into.

XII. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

XIII. An independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic independence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.

On that day every minute of my time was taken up by discussions with members of parliament and ministers. I must have completed the formation of the Government by the time I appeared on the next day before the Reichstag.

My attempt to take Ebert instead of Scheidemann for the Government had caused some offence, even to Ebert himself, who resented this interference in the " supreme command " of the party. Bauer was present as the second representative of the Social Democrats.

I was for the present unsuccessful in obtaining the nomination of Haussmann ; this was prevented by the jealousy which some of his own party felt towards him, and which the other parties felt towards the Progressives.

The post of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had fortunately not been demanded for the parties. I hesitated between Solf and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, our minister in Copenhagen. From various quarters pressure was brought to bear on me to continue Herr von Hintze in office.

In the afternoon when Herr von Hintze, Herr von Payer and I were with the Kaiser, His Majesty turned directly to Hintze and urged him to remain, but the Minister persisted in the refusal which he had already announced.[1]

I then decided finally for Solf. Two considerations were decisive : Solf had confessed to Ethical Imperialism and to a peace of understanding in many a strong speech, and had even made the enemy listen. Further : his appointment would be a pointed assertion of our just claim to colonies. The phrase, ' A colony is a mission field,' had been coined by him and was in his case no mere form of speech. As Governor of Samoa and as Secretary of State for the Colonies he had been a model of humanity and firmness, as our enemies themselves recognized.

The Kaiser parted very unwillingly with Hintze, and resolved upon the nomination of Erzberger with reluctance. Herr von Payer considered Erzberger in the present situation less dangerous in the Government than in Parliament. The

[1] Hintze then became representative of the Foreign Office at Supreme Headquarters together with Lersner.

Centre Party had anyhow been insistent that he should be appointed ; its other representatives to be appointed were Herren Groeber and Trimborn.

I could not bring myself to find an office for everyone of the newly appointed party leaders. Only Trimborn and Bauer took over Imperial Ministries. Scheidemann, Erzberger and Groeber became Secretaries of State without Portfolio. On the fourth I already had conceived the plan of forming them into an intimate council of war, in whose meetings, apart from them, only the Vice-Chancellor, Count Roedern and Solf should, generally speaking, take part.

The final list of Ministers was composed as follows :

Trimborn, M. of R., Ministry of the Interior.

Bauer, M. of R., Ministry of Labour.

As Secretaries of State without Portfolio :

Groeber, M. of R.

Scheidemann, M. of R.

Erzberger, M. of R.

Haussmann, M. of R. (on 14th October).

Dr. Solf retained the Colonies, and became as well Secretary of State for the Foreign Office.

The following who had been Secretaries of State in the Hertling ministry were to retain their office :

Dr. von Krause, Ministry of Justice.

Count von Roedern, Treasury.

Ruedlin, Post Office.

Freiherr von Stein, Ministry of Economics.

von Waldow, Ministry of Food.

Ritter von Mann, Admiralty.

Herr von Waldow was very reluctant to remain under the changed conditions, but he was willing to make the sacrifice in order to secure the good will of the agricultural community.

I came to an agreement with Herr von Payer that I should for the present become Prussian Foreign Minister only, and not Prime Minister. I had my scruples as Heir Apparent of Baden against holding this office for Prussia, and I doubted whether the Imperial Chancellor would not be too seriously burdened with work in the coming weeks to be able to fulfil

this function properly, that is to say, to take part in the meetings of the Prussian Cabinet. These considerations induced me to postpone my decision. For the present the Presidency of the Prussian Cabinet was to be in the hands of Vice-President Friedberg ; at the same time he was to take part in the meetings of the Imperial Government as Secretary of State without Portfolio and thus provide the necessary liaison with the Prussian Government. Then, too, the National Liberals would have in him a representative in the Imperial Government.

We wanted to make no essential change in the composition of the Prussian Government ; Hergt (Finances), Drews (Interior), Spahn (Justice), Schmidt-Ott (Education), Fischbeck (Trade), von Eisenhardt-Rothe (Agriculture) were to remain.

Then I discussed with Herr von Payer our programme of internal policy which was to be announced on the morrow. Hardly any difference of opinion showed itself. In most questions of the day (self-government for Alsace-Lorraine, the administration of the State of Siege, the Prussian Franchise) our path was marked out for us partly by the necessities of the situation and partly through the pledges which Count Hertling had already given to the parties.

We were both reluctant to tamper with the fundamental traditions of Article 9 of the Constitution : ' No one can be at the same time a member of the Federal Council and the Reichstag.' And here I knew that the Federal Governments shared my misgivings. From their point of view, a member of the Federal Council was an Ambassador, who received instructions from them, and who conceivably would have to vote in accordance with his instructions, and contrary to his conviction. A member of the Reichstag, on the other hand, ought, properly speaking, only to recognize the obligations imposed on him by his own conscience and by his responsibility to his constituents.

We agreed upon a solution which so far as I remember was proposed by Lewald, the Under-Secretary for the Interior : The parliamentary Secretaries of State were to keep their seat

in the Reichstag (which meant the abolition of Article 21), but were not to be appointed members of the Federal Council. Up till now every Secretary of State had been a member of the Federal Council, in consequence of a practice that had been made necessary by the first clause of Article 9, which allowed the representatives of the Chancellor in their character of Federal Councillors at any time to take part in the deliberations of the Reichstag. We found a solution in supplementing the law on the Chancellor's Deputies so that the Secretaries of State should have the right of appearing before the Reichstag at will as deputies of the Chancellor, even without being members of the Federal Council. In this way we felt we were satisfying the demand that the predominance of the Federal Council over the Reichstag should be abolished, while at the same time protecting the Federal Council from a ' parliamentarisation ' which would have impaired the character of this ' most peculiar institution ' of the German Empire.

Late in the afternoon I found time to visit for a few minutes the men who were engaged in the preparation of the speech. They were in high spirits and felt they were succeeding. Simons had formulated his Fourteen Points. In every word of them there sounded the restrained passion with which he went to the work of pleading Germany's suit before the bar of the whole world. In the course of the work he had said to Hahn : ' I don't at all know whether the Prince has any use for me for his task. Do you know what the principle of my foreign politics is ? " Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." ' Hahn was able to reply : This is just the motto of the Prince's ' Ethical Imperialism.'

By 11 o'clock in the evening the first draft of the speech was finished. I had collected at my hotel among others : Haeften, Solf, Warburg, Simons, Haussmann and Hahn ; all of them in principle opponents of the armistice offer. I give the speech in the rough form in which it was then read aloud to the company :

'Gentlemen! I have taken the first opportunity of presenting the new Government to the Reichstag.

After the resignation of the Right Hon. Count Hertling I was entrusted by His Majesty the Kaiser with the task of entering into negotiations with the party-leaders. I undertook this task in the consciousness of the common political aims which inspire alike the declared policy of the Reichstag majority and the line of thought which I have represented in my public utterances. The negotiations with the representatives of the three majority parties have been carried on on this basis, and have led to complete unanimity with regard to our programme.

The first action which the newly constituted Government had to take is well known to you. After perusal of the reports and memoranda of the late Government and of the military authorities I felt it my duty to dispatch the note to the President of the United States at the moment of entering upon my office. It is now my duty to submit to you, without reserve, the considerations which led the Government to take this step.

In the middle of September on the Macedonian front a general enemy offensive was initiated and was successful in piercing the Bulgarian lines at the Czerna bend. The retreat extended to the next formations to right and left, and led to the collapse of the whole front. Under the pressure of these events the Bulgarian Government approached the enemy with the request for an armistice and for peace.

Since the first news of the enemy offensive reached us we have done all that was humanly in our power to help our Bulgarian ally. The Bulgarian Government did not wait for the arrival of this help but concluded an armistice, the chief conditions of which are the evacuation of occupied Serbian and Greek territory, the demobilization of the army and the handing over of the railways. Thus Bulgaria is for political and military purposes eliminated from the ranks of the Alliance.

The road to Turkey has been cut, but the communications with her via Constanza and Odessa are being maintained. Though her situation has thus been rendered difficult, and though she is herself being hard pressed by the enemy in Syria, Turkey perseveres in her loyalty to her allies.

The struggle which is now being fought out on the Western front is the fiercest we have had to sustain since the beginning of the war.

Gentlemen, from this situation I was led immediately on taking office to the following conclusion:

If the enemy persists in the continuation of the war—if they will only make peace with a Germany which has been broken up and beaten to her knees—well, then the struggle must be continued, and it will cost them dear.

But I, the responsible spokesman of German policy, cannot let our army fight on a single day longer without making perfectly sure whether there is not still some possibility of obtaining a peace compatible with Germany's honour. This was my reason for taking such a step—and for not taking too great account of formal considerations—a step which must bring certainty, certainty for the German people, certainty for the army.

In the note which we sent to President Wilson we took upon ourselves the obligation of negotiating upon all the various problems to which this war has given rise, on the basis of the principles outlined by him. The President's programme is most completely expressed in the Fourteen Points of his Message to Congress of 8th January. In this message all the later demands are substantially implied. I will therefore now take these points one by one :

As his first aim the President puts the formation of a League of Peace which must be openly arrived at and which must exclude every form of separate engagement of the type of the offensive and defensive alliances which have up till now obtained. It is in Germany's interest that the diplomacy of the future should flow in these open channels which can be controlled by the public opinion of the peoples. Nothing contributed so much to the perils of the situation in August 1914 as did the secret agreements which enabled the statesmen to deny before their parliaments the existence of a treaty in case of war but which bound the honour of Government and people, without even the statesmen themselves clearly realizing the fact.

In the second place President Wilson demands unconditional freedom of navigation on the high seas in peace and in war.

This demand is deeply anchored in the history of the German and American peoples. The world is to-day of our opinion, that that abuse of the open seas ought no longer to be tolerated which closes its trade-routes, and so threatens the whole population of a country with starvation and the coming generation with disease.

It is just as much a requirement imposed upon us by the world conscience that the weapons of destruction should not be used to sink enemy merchant-ships with their crew and

passengers without warning. We desire to have the measures for the protection of non-combatants by water and by land uniformly regulated.

Point 3 : In the regulation of its trade-relations with other nations the German people demands equality and not privilege. It was the various privileges which more often than anything else caused economic friction between the nations. This cause of friction must disappear when once equality is established.

Wilson's fourth demand is concerned with the question of disarmament. Here he touches upon a point which is vital for the new order. Further competition in armament, on land, by sea or in the air is, after the experience of this war, an impossibility. Proportionate disarmament on land, by sea and in the air is demanded not only by economic interest but also by the conscience of mankind, which cannot for long countenance either poison-gas or aerial attacks on open towns. The German Government has already in its answer to the Pope declared its willingness to disarm. But no state can lay aside its arms until it has sufficient guarantees that its neighbours, too, will content themselves with the force which is necessary for maintaining internal order. We will gladly collaborate with our present enemies in order to discover such guarantees. In this task the Governments will require to be continuously controlled by popularly-elected representative assemblies.

Point 5 : We desire a regulation of colonial questions on the principle that colonial possessions should be proportioned to the economic capacities of the European nations and to the extent to which their history has proved them worthy to protect the coloured peoples entrusted to their care. Economic efficiency alone is no legal title. I share the point of view of the Secretary for the Colonies (Dr. Solf) : " A colony is a mission field." Those nations which tried to act up to this principle before the war have acquired a moral right to be colonial powers.

Point 6 : President Wilson further demands the evacuation of all Russian territories, freedom for Russia to manage her own affairs with any help from other nations that she may desire. We are in full agreement with this principle, and have therefore in our dealings with Russia undertaken not to treat any further Russian territory as independent unless Russia herself recognizes it as such. That President Wilson, too, does not regard as " Russian " all the territories which were once subject to the Czar is clear from his treatment of Poland, to which I shall return later. Thus I imagine that I am in agreement with

Wilson in not regarding either the Baltic, Lithuanian and Caucasian territories, or Finland and the Ukraine, as Russian territory in the strict sense. We are prepared to evacuate these territories when once guarantees have been given that they will be able to determine their future fate by means of representative bodies elected in complete freedom to the exclusion of all terrorization either by demagogues or military, and of all attempts at corruption or seduction. This freedom of self-determination should be guaranteed by means of international supervision. It naturally implies also the right of any portion of territory to re-unite itself to the new Russia, or to enter openly into any other peaceful association.

Point 7 : The restitution of Belgian sovereignty and integrity I have regarded from the beginning of the war as a pledge of honour. I still maintain the position which Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg on 4th August, 1914, expressed in his words : " We have done Belgium a wrong which we must right again." [1]

Point 8 : We do not desire to annex to Germany any French territory ; of that there ought to be no question. The population could never concur in such an annexation ; it would have to be a forcible annexation of the kind which we have expressly rejected.

We have further made up our minds to discuss with our enemies even the question of Alsace-Lorraine. If Wilson sees an injustice in the treaty of 1871 which gave Alsace-Lorraine to Germany, he must, if he is true to his principle, see an injustice in the acts of violence by which France once tore away the districts of Alsace and of Lorraine from Germany. If Alsace and Lorraine are not to be continually an apple of discord to Europe, their fate must not be determined by any considerations of wrongs done in the past, but by a regard for the rights which have grown up with their present population. This population ought not to be handed over in the future to a German rule based on military force alone any more than to a ruthless French reaction. It must have its say in determining its future.

Points 9 and 10 : The regulation of the internal affairs of Austria-Hungary and its settlement with Italy are the concern of our faithful allies, whose interests are dear to us as our own.[2]

[1] The actual words of Bethmann were as follows : ' Thus we were compelled to override the just protest of the Luxemburg and the Belgian Government. The wrong—I say it openly—the wrong which we thus commit, we shall try to repair as soon as our military aim has been reached.'

[2] In the draft Point 11 referring to Rumania, Serbia and Montenegro was missing.

Point 12 : President Wilson also mentions Turkey. The demands that he makes apply almost equally to any nation which is made up of different racial elements. The proof that this problem can be solved is given by Switzerland with its three nationalities and its incomparable patriotism.

Point 13 : An independent Polish state has already been set up. Here Germany, in adopting the demand of Wilson's, trenches upon matters which are of vital concern to her faithful ally Austria-Hungary. We could answer the question of allowing an independent Poland to arise without further ado, because a basis for the creation of an independent Poland is already given in the resolution of the Central Powers of November 1916. Germany is ready to go further and to grant Poland free access to the sea, such as would consist in harbour works of its own on the Baltic, assured land-communications with this harbour and suitable traffic regulations for the Vistula. Should Poland desire an international guarantee of its economic and political independence, Germany would not dream of opposing such guarantee, provided it had no unfriendly implications towards any other member of the Concert of Peoples. It must be admitted that the question as to which districts are inhabited by a genuinely Polish population is a matter of lively discussion among the inhabitants concerned. There are hotly disputed districts in Poland, just as in Ulster. However this question may be resolved, we must above all take care to ensure for the national and religious minorities an adequate existence within the frontiers to be determined.

Point 14 : President Wilson rightly regards as the coping-stone of all these peace-aims the organization of a universal League of Nations ; without this all the other stones of his work of peace would not hold together. The Germany which issues from the fearful shocks of the world-war, will with the most sincere conviction take part in negotiations for the purpose of creating mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial inviolability, for great and small states alike.

A League of Nations which is true to itself ought not to be sullied by a commercial war, such as some of our enemies plan for the conclusion of this war. Only if after the end of this war foreigners in every country are given without reserve equal chances for commercial development, will the League of Nations be a reality and no mere phrase. If the League of Nations is turned into a league of the commercial enemies of Germany, this will merely mean a continuation of the war with other weapons.

I should like to add a few points more to Wilson's demands. From the further utterances of the President it is clear that he regards the principles which he here turns to use against Germany and her allies, as a general basis for a future concert of peoples. They must therefore be applied to our enemies too. Among many of them you may find whole nations or at least fractions of nations, living oppressed by a rule to which they have been forcibly subjected. These nations, too, have a right to such forms of life as are congenial to them, within the framework of the states to which they belong. The justice of principles which are one-sidedly directed against the Central Powers will never win the recognition of the world.

These are the war aims which the present Government will try to realize during the peace negotiations. I think it right that our people should know them, and that the other nations should know them too.

As regards internal policy, the position which I have taken up is clear from the method in which the Government was formed. I have relied exclusively on the majority parties, because I am convinced that only a Government which bases itself upon an agreement of principle can undertake the responsibility for carrying out a definite programme.

Gentlemen, I do not take the view that the majority Government which has to-day been formed, is a mere passing war-time expedient, and that peace will bring the restoration of the infinite divisions of the old party-life. To form a Majority is to create a political will. From this point of view I rejected the idea of a Coalition Ministry which should include all parties. Coalition ministries weaken the executive and paralyze the criticism of Parliament. An essential factor of parliamentary life is a patriotic Opposition.

Political criticism cannot weaken the forces of the national defence if it be a constructive criticism. I do not anticipate any other form of criticism in this hour of trial.

The universal, secret, equal, and direct suffrage in Prussia is to be introduced immediately. It is hoped that this step will lead to a similar development in the other federal States which are still without it.

The stability of the Government requires that the members of the Reichstag who, according to the Imperial decree of 30th September,[1] are to take part in the government should not lose that touch with their constituents which is given by their Parliamentary Mandate. I have, therefore, with the consent

[1] *Vide supra*, Vol. I. p. 366.

of the Federal Governments brought in a Bill to restrict suitably the force of Article 9 and to cancel Article 21 of the Constitution. I request that this Bill be speedily made law.

The abolition of the state of siege is hardly possible so long as the war lasts. The grievances to which it has led can be remedied if the Kaiser by an act of His Supreme Military Authority puts the Generals of Reserve Commanding Districts under the control of the Minister of War, who in his turn receives his instructions from the Chancellor. I shall introduce this change at once in order to remedy the very justifiable complaints against the censorship. This change in the law regarding the state of siege cannot be delayed, since it appears necessary for the protection of the freedom of the individual, of the Press and of assembly.

With 30th September, the date of the Imperial decree, a new epoch in Germany's history begins. But to-day we are primarily concerned with the question as to the immediate action to be taken by the Government. The force which this Government can exert in the cause of peace depends on its having a determined popular will at its back. Only if the enemy feel that the German people is united in the support of its responsible statesmen can words become deeds.

We cannot allow ourselves any illusions. Our situation is serious. I must reckon with the possibility that the step which I have undertaken will open the way to an honourable peace, but equally with the other possibility that the German people will be called upon to summon up all their powers of willing sacrifice for a last life and death struggle—if that is what the other side wants.

Neither the faint-hearted in Germany nor the enemy should underrate the powers of resistance which are still latent in our front and in our people. Neither our people nor the army which has stood the trial of a hundred battles would understand the action of a government which consented to any peace that sacrifices the honour of the nation.

I cannot doubt that the gentlemen of the Left[1] too will stand by the country in its hour of crisis. Many of them have fought against an enforced peace such as a victorious Germany might impose upon the conquered. Do they now realize that if Germany lies helpless before her enemies, it will mean an

[1] With these words I had intended to turn to the Independents in the hopes of exerting a moral pressure upon them, if that were anyhow possible.

" Entente Peace," which will surpass everything that ever in the course of history was inflicted upon a brave people ?

You have heard my view; I have spoken frankly and plainly. I could do so owing to the unanimity which prevails among the Members of the Government. I ask you too for an equally clear declaration of your attitude ; I ask you to grant the newly-formed Government and its programme your vote of confidence.'

As I finished reading the speech, it was clear to me from their looks and remarks that my hearers felt as I did. The sense of national humiliation began to melt away. We stood up to the struggle for our rights, which my speech should initiate.

Solf and Haeften went to Herr von Payer in the intention of reading and defending the speech before the assembled ministers. I regarded that as a mere act of courtesy and therefore remained to discuss questions of detail.

Haussmann attempted to obtain a formulation for the Eighth Point which should only promise autonomy and not mention the referendum.

I added a demand for an international investigation of the question of war guilt :

' We are willing to let the question of responsibility for the war and for illegal acts during the war be investigated before a court of the fittest persons which the neutral peoples may appoint from their own ranks.'

Then at midnight Haeften came into the room. He was pale as death. I thought he must be bringing the news of some catastrophe at the front. He announced that the assembled ministers and in particular, too, the members of the Foreign Office who had been requested to attend—among them the expert for America—were unanimously of the opinion that our situation did not admit of the making of such a speech as I intended to make. They did not doubt of its good effect within Germany, but the consequences abroad would be disastrous. In particular the definition of the Fourteen Points would endanger the whole armistice action. Wilson would want to interpret his Fourteen Points

himself. He would be offended by any detailed programme and would answer either with a simple refusal or at best with counter-questions, whereas what we needed was the armistice. In the view of the Foreign Office a general acceptance of the Fourteen Points was the only thing possible.

I interrupted Haeften with the question : ' What is Solf's opinion ? '—' Solf accepts the verdict of the Foreign Office, and I have to require in the name of the Supreme Command that the speech shall not be made.'

We had been forging ahead, confidently expecting to secure our own aims independently of the armistice policy. We felt ourselves suddenly struck lame by Haeften's message. I looked round the assembled company and saw the light fade away from their eyes. Then Simons spoke. He stuck to his opinion that the world and the German people ought to be informed as to how we interpreted the Fourteen Points ; but he could not recommend disregarding the considered judgment of the experts. Warburg followed suit ; he must admit the possibility of counter-questions, and the military situation must be decisive. Hahn defended his position desperately. If we now took over the Fourteen Points in bulk, we could not later begin to make reservations ; we must define each of the fourteen conditions exactly, and in the case of some of them, for instance regarding Alsace and Poland, we must bring forward our reservations and get them accepted ; and this at once, otherwise we should find our head in the noose. It was not only America that had to be considered. If the peace party in England was to raise its head, we should have to come forward with precise war aims. A peace offer that confined itself to general phrases would be discounted as insincere, just as had been the case already. Haeften answered that all these considerations were merely secondary to the task of bringing about an armistice ; this must not be delayed.

I asked the company to leave me alone. Instinct told me to stick to my speech, but logic seemed to favour the other side. The chances of the offer being accepted would not be bettered but rather worsened if we defined our interpre-

tation of the Fourteen Points ; it would be all the easier for Wilson to refuse. The gentlemen of the Foreign Office were right in their feeling that the tone of my speech did not ring of surrender. The representative of the Supreme Command had only done his duty in trying to keep me on the path into which I had allowed myself to be driven. It was true that the precise conditions would bring the peace parties in the enemy lands into action and lead to a trial of strength between them and their Governments. But they would be defeated this time, and would only succeed at the end of the campaign—if our expected collapse had not occurred by then. My speech helped the cause of peace, it did not further the armistice. The Offer, on the other hand, had to secure an armistice at once ; such was the plan. I was convinced that this plan rested upon illusions ; but was I entitled to undermine it ?

At the time I felt I could not take this responsibility ; I determined to continue upon the unhappy course on which I had already entered, and gave up my speech. To-day I regret this decision. Germany's fate would now perhaps be a different one if I had then gone against the recommendations of my official advisers, had pulled my team round and reverted to my own policy. My speech would have aroused Germany to the startling consciousness that it had never considered what Wilson's programme really meant. Wilson would have regarded my Fourteen Points as a provocation —that is clear to me in the light of subsequent development —and would have replied with dishonouring conditions ; this would have shown him up and prepared our people for a last desperate resistance. On 5th October Germany could have borne a breakdown of the armistice negotiations ; in November, after the demoralizing exchange of notes had been going on for five weeks over the heads of the people and the cessation of the bloodshed had become for the working and fighting nation the object of a longing that daily grew stronger,—this was no longer possible. It may appear presumptuous to assert what is to-day my conviction—that my speech would certainly not have led to the kind of armis-

tice which the Supreme Command expected to conclude, but neither would it have led to the armistice which actually had to be concluded on 11th November.[1]

The session of the Reichstag was postponed to 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Deutelmoser, Haeften and Lewald, in the same night and during the morning of 5th October, made a new draft based upon the old manuscript; I then tried to give unity to the speech. Every word that might irritate Wilson and give him an excuse for refusing was avoided. With regard to external politics the speech did little more than announce the step that had been made towards peace. I was successful in maintaining the general line: Our readiness for a just peace, and our resolution to fight on if the enemy refused it us. The part of the speech dealing with internal affairs was recomposed by the Under-Secretary, Herr Lewald, and I took it over word for word.

The effect of the speech [2] in the Reichstag was considerable and stemmed the tide of the panic which had made such inroads during the last few days. The President of the Reichstag came to me in the Chancellor's room and congratulated me; he said he had been afraid of an hysterical outburst among the deputies. The formation of our Government prevented the public alarm at the armistice offer from taking too disastrous forms, and I was met on all sides by an embarrassing confidence; but I knew how hollow were the grounds on which it was based; no one could imagine that our offer was actually a bolt shot at random,[3] everyone believed

[1] I add a minute which was written in my Secretariat on 5th October in the erroneous belief that my determination to drop the speech could still be shaken: '. . . It should not be supposed that any subsequent definition of the Fourteen Points will be any help to us. Wilson's present idea of their meaning includes perhaps the demand for the cession of Posen and Danzig, of Flensburg, of course Alsace-Lorraine—perhaps even in Silesia he will discover a Polish irredenta.'

[2] An extract from the speech is printed in the *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 34*a*.

[3] From the diary of Prince Ysenburg: '6th October, Sunday—Bademax has made a peace offer to Wilson. Either Erzberger and Scheidemann have been carrying on behind the scene negotiations which will secure its success, or they are really patriotic enough to have undertaken to stiffen up popular feeling in the case of a rejection. I incline to the first alternative.'

that it was the result of a far-seeing policy which had taken care to ascertain in advance how it would be received.

The note of resolution which I had sounded found an encouraging echo. The attitude of the Social Democrats stiffened in the consciousness of their responsibility. The *Vorwaerts*[1] urged the workmen not to break off the war too soon and to take warning from the Russian example. The Russians had lacked the morale necessary to preserve discipline and order up to the last ; the break-up of discipline in Germany would only further Imperialism among her enemies.

Unfortunately the *Vorwaerts*, too, pitched its expectations high :

> ' Such is the epoch-making event of 5th October, which actually puts the finishing touch to the most terrible of all wars . . . If the proposal of the German Government is accepted in its present form, *armistice on all fronts* will immediately follow.'

Uneasy as this treacherous optimism which greeted my Chancellorship made me, I owed to it the few calm days which fate granted me during my time of office.

I had a chance to get to know my colleagues, to plan and to act without sustaining pressure either from abroad or from the Supreme Command.

Very soon I became aware of two fundamental faults in the construction of the newly-formed Government.

1. The parliamentary ministers did not regard themselves as my chosen colleagues, but as party representatives, owing their office to their parties. They therefore continually felt themselves bound to ascertain whether they had the assent of their principals. Scheidemann in particular was a victim of this feeling of dependence. ' I must consult my party,' was his continual refrain. The fallacy that democracy and leadership are mutually exclusive had taken possession of the Social Democrats. They demanded division of responsi-

[1] Of 6th October, 1918. Most of the patriotic articles came from the pen of the editor, Stampfer, who was a champion of our rights during the Versailles peace negotiations also.

bility and thus paralyzed the executive. But the other party representatives, too, were in continual touch with their parties, which they had to keep informed and to win over to their policy.[1] Indiscretions were naturally liable to occur, and our deliberations to be influenced more than was desirable by passing currents of opinion.

2. I was to blame for the second fault of construction—the War Cabinet with its Ministers without Portfolio. I had been desirous of continuing the specialist ministers in their offices, but in the course of my term of office I should have felt greatly relieved had the parliamentary ministers been adequately occupied with departments of their own. They felt impelled to devote their surplus energy to Foreign Affairs. I am convinced that the Cabinet meetings to discuss the Wilson notes would have come to a conclusion sooner if the different ministries had been waiting for the return of their chiefs. Their inexperience of the business in hand would have been adequately supplemented by the superior specialized knowledge of the Under-Secretaries.

The pillar of my Cabinet was Herr von Payer. He was unshakable in his resistance to irrelevant suggestions intended to force the pace of his decisions. His caution and his firmness kept the excitable members of the War Cabinet in hand and checked the flow of their high-sounding phrases, as one who would say: 'This is not the Inter-Party Committee; any position which you may here take up on one day you must be prepared to maintain on the next.' He showed the same natural dignity alike in his relations with the Army Command and with parliamentary circles. Even his political opponents felt that his judg-

[1] 'Just as the members of parliamentary committees were mere delegates of the parties and had to carry out their decisions, so, too, some of those members of the Government who had been suggested by the parties felt obliged still to regard themselves as mere delegates. In fact, they were in some cases, for instance, in the case of the Social Democrats nothing else than mere envoys plenipotentiary of the party, and were not entitled to express themselves upon any question of the slightest importance without taking its decision and awaiting its instruction. This notion of government is perilous for a great Empire.' (Payer, *op. cit.* p. 116.)

ment was never coloured by personal motives. Germany's fate caused him unspeakable suffering, and it was only his desire not to desert the sinking ship which led him to remain in office. From the very first Herr von Payer showed me a consideration and a kindness which I shall never forget. I think he always displayed a happy instinct in dealing with internal policy, but in matters of foreign affairs I could not count upon him as an ally. His whole instinct was against a servile policy ; ' We cannot make any admission of powerlessness ' was a remark he made in the Main Committee on 28th September. But unfortunately his ignorance of foreign countries and his dislike of amateurishness led him to rely on the experts of the Foreign Office rather than on his own feelings.

This was not the case with Erzberger and Scheidemann. They, too, were without any experience of the countries and the peoples which they wished to influence, but they had had an unlimited confidence in their own common sense and their own intuition since the day when they made the timely recognition that we must emphasize the strictly defensive character of our war aims. Thus they joined my Cabinet in a spirit of complacency, with the feeling that they had already proved their capacity in external politics. In the deliberations of October and November they were not lacking in good ideas and apposite phrases. But in the decisive questions of foreign politics their instinct led them astray. They had an exaggerated terror that they might irritate Wilson by a dignified tone of speech, and would not believe that peoples who like the Anglo-Saxons are accustomed to rule, only become harder where they meet with servility. An unkind fate had impressed upon these two gentlemen the conviction that they owed it to themselves and to their parties to play their part in the drafting of documents of State.

The presence of Count Roedern in the Cabinet gave me a feeling of assurance. He had been repeatedly proposed for the post of Chancellor—even during the last few days. He had proved his mettle in the administration of Alsace and had, even as a young man, been referred to by Clemens von

Delbrueck[1] as 'one of the most promising horses in my stable.' I had known him intimately for years; in the course of walks in the Black Forest we had discovered our agreement on the main questions of foreign policy. But Count Roedern had never recovered from the black day which he had passed in General Headquarters—29th September, on which General Ludendorff had compelled the declaration of our military bankruptcy. Since that day he had been convinced that we must wind up the war somehow whatever happened, and took up his stand against any public utterances which might give Wilson a handle for breaking off the negotiations.

Solf had come to the conclusion in the night of 4th-5th October that the position on which we had up to then taken up our stand must be given up. As Minister for Foreign Affairs he felt himself bound to try and give the offer, which he had at first resisted as useless, every chance of success. As an outsider he had been reluctant to take over such a complicated official apparatus, and in the question of the armistice he was obstructed by a well-organized official opinion. This comes out in a document whose origin is even to-day obscure, in which the following significant words are to be found:

> 'The Government which has thus been newly formed would have at the given moment to apply to President Wilson with the request that he should undertake the restoration of peace, and with this purpose should propose to all belligerent nations the dispatch of plenipotentiaries to Washington.
>
> *According as our military authorities may wish, we would suggest to the President, if desirable, that he should invite the belligerents to the conclusion of an immediate armistice.*[2] Our request to Mr. Wilson would be accompanied by the declaration that Germany, and perhaps the Quadruple Alliance, is prepared to accept the well-known Fourteen Points of the President as basis for the peace negotiations. . . .'

The above composition[3] is dated 28th September, the day before the Secretary of State von Hintze's journey to

[1] Secretary of State for Home Affairs, later Head of the Imperial Civil Cabinet.

[2] My italics.

[3] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 12.

General Headquarters ; it does not bear his signature, as might be expected, but the names of three officials who remained in their post after Hintze's resignation and whom Solf now found among his official advisers.[1]

About this time the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs made a very frank attempt to justify his right-about-face. The ' psychological method,' for which he had so long fought in alliance with myself, Haeften and Hahn, had been deprived of its military basis and thus of its meaning. In every event the armistice action must go on its course unimpeded. Thus he was anxiously on the watch not to permit a single word to be uttered that was not appropriate to our situation. In the last resort he, Count Roedern, the ministers Erzberger and Scheidemann were all overwhelmed by a feeling which—later on, when we were concerned in defending ourselves on the war-guilt question—a prominent parliamentarian expressed in the following drastic words : ' If you are lying on the ground and someone has got his foot on your stomach, you don't say anything likely to annoy him.'

Groeber and Friedberg were by instinct determined opponents of this policy, but they maintained an attitude of the greatest restraint with regard to foreign affairs.

When later the War Minister Scheüch and Conrad Haussmann [2] entered the inner War Council, I could reckon

[1] The words that preceded these were as follows : ' The most indispensable condition for a move towards peace is the immediate formation of a new Government on a broad national basis and on the free initiative of H.M. the Kaiser. For this purpose it would be desirable that a telegram should arrive if possible by to-morrow evening announcing that the offered resignation of Count Hertling has been accepted and instructing the Vice-Chancellor von Payer to make immediate proposals to the Kaiser with regard to the person of the new Chancellor and the composition of the new Government. The new Cabinet should unite all the forces of the nation on the broadest national basis and make them available for defence of the country. To secure the success of this project the Kaiser should expressly desire the Vice-Chancellor to receive the President of the Reichstag, his deputies, and the party leaders, and to work out his proposals in the closest collaboration with the Representative Assembly.

[2] Haussmann was appointed on the 14th, Scheüch on the 9th of October. The latter was not a permanent member of the Inner War Council, but was often invited to take part in its deliberations. David became Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office.

on a broader basis of support for my policy. But they could not enforce their views either in face of the general opinion. General Scheüch remained in the eyes of the Cabinet a mere soldier, and Haussmann suffered from Payer's habit of treating him with the condescension of an older and wiser friend.

In my attitude to the question how we were to approach the enemy, I should find myself isolated,—this fact impressed itself upon me in the very first few days of my Chancellorship. I did not want to be entirely in the hands of the Foreign Office and therefore insisted on calling Simons to the Chancellery. However, he refused the position of Secretary,[1] and I offered this post to Excellenz Wahnschaffe, who had been head of the Chancellery under Bethmann. He accepted the appointment, but would only take it on provisionally, until he had initiated Geheimrat Simons into the business. Thereupon Simons at last accepted. The co-operation of these two men proved of the greatest value to me. In foreign and home affairs alike legal questions played a prominent part, and gave Simons daily opportunity of showing his mastery in this field. Wahnschaffe had an extraordinary understanding of government machinery, and I continually had new cause for admiration of his skill in handling men.

The Councillor of Legation von Prittwitz became my Adjutant—the best I could have wished for. He showed in his work an admirable precision and facility. His cheerfulness tided me over many an evil hour.

Haeften became, together with Colonel von Winterfeld, the representative of the Supreme Command attached to the Chancellor.

I took care to see that Hahn was given a position under Geheimrat Simons.

In the night of 4th-5th October he had come into dramatic conflict with Solf and Haeften. Though I sympathized with him in my inmost heart, I had yet to maintain unity of policy, now that I had given my name to the one fateful step. So I dropped my original plan of keeping Hahn in my immediate

[1] Chef der Reichskanzlei.

environment. But I wanted to keep him in readiness, in case the time came to depart from the line marked out by the armistice offer.

Perhaps even Wilson's expected reply would transform the situation.

During these first days the deliberations of the Cabinet showed a remarkable degree of good will and relevance. It is true that there were signs of a slight pressure from the parties; they persisted in their demand for the removal of two Generals Commanding who had made themselves unpopular in their Districts by their administration of the state of siege.

The retention of von Stein as War Minister was quite impossible ; according to the information received from the ministers the enmity between him and the Reichstag was so little veiled that co-operation with the Parliamentary Government on a basis of mutual confidence was not to be expected.

A serious difference of opinion showed itself in the discussion on the advisability of pardoning political offenders ; in Liebknecht's case the majority of the Cabinet were only for a commutation of his sentence of hard labour into one of imprisonment or 'fortress.' Scheidemann, however, declared himself opposed to any further detention of Liebknecht ; Liebknecht at liberty could be combated by counter-speeches, as a martyr he would be more dangerous. When I asked him whether he thought the liberation of Liebknecht compatible with the national security, he answered with a resolute affirmative ; if any danger should arise, one could always shut him up again. Lewald of the Ministry of the Interior pointed out that that would bring the odium of his re-imprisonment upon the head of the present Government. But Scheidemann remained firm, convinced that at the bottom of their hearts the Independents desired and needed the imprisonment of Liebknecht in order to create continual new embarrassment for the Majority Socialists in Parliament and before the masses. We postponed the decision.

Since the dispatch of our note to Wilson the thought that the President might in his answer demand the abdication of the Kaiser left me no peace. I made an attempt at prevention.

Through the person of a neutral diplomat whom I particularly valued, I caused to be conveyed to the diplomatic channels of the American State Department a warning against any interference of Wilson's in our internal affairs ; in that case the peace action must come to nothing ; the war would be continued with the full extent of our powers, and probably confidence in the League of Nations idea as well as in the men who had advocated it would be shattered. But I had at bottom little hope that Wilson would let himself be restrained.

I did not inform my colleagues of the step I had undertaken ; but I took advantage of the first opportunity to put to the assembled Cabinet the question : If Wilson were to demand the abdication of the Kaiser—which was by no means impossible—should I have the Cabinet at my back in resolutely resisting such interference ? I asked the Ministers to answer me one after the other. Groeber was ready to make himself responsible for the support of the Majority. Scheidemann declared that the temper of the people was ugly, and that of Berlin particularly alarming. ' But I do not expect that such a condition will ever be made.' Erzberger maintained on the contrary that such conditions must be reckoned with, but a Republic would mean the downfall of the Reich—the South German states were strongly monarchical. I then repeated my question to Scheidemann : ' What would the people say if this condition were to be made ? ' Scheidemann answered : ' If the question were to be put : War or desertion of the Hohenzollerns, the people would be for peace, even at this price. I shall take up my stand for rejection, then success will be possible, since such shameless conditions would probably be coupled with others equally shameless.'

Payer met with no contradiction when he formulated the Cabinet's point of view as follows : ' We must fight any such demands of Wilson's tooth and nail.' I expressed my satisfaction at this unanimity.[1]

[1] In cases where no reference is given for the account of sessions and the like, these are based on the minutes of the Chancellery Archives.

It was not only their own feelings which they thus expressed, but they represented faithfully the temper of the circles which stood behind them. The demand for abdication would not have been a subject of discussion for any one of the parties represented in my Cabinet, if Wilson had not deliberately thrust the Kaiser controversy before the German people. Wishes for the Kaiser's abdication were at that time rather to be heard on the Right [1] and from a few convinced monarchists of the Left, such as Max Weber and Naumann, who found the notion that a German Kaiser should have begged for an armistice from President Wilson intolerable.

' It is unworthy of him (of the Kaiser) and of the throne,' writes Max Weber in one of his letters now published,[2] ' that he should eat the bread of charity in a mutilated Germany. . . . If he goes *now*, without pressure from abroad, he will go in honour, and a chivalrous sympathy of the nation will be with him. But above all, the position of the dynasty will be saved.'

In a similar sense wrote Naumann about that time to the Chief of the Civil Cabinet.

Such stern foresight as his failed me then. It is true that the Kaiser at that time frequently felt an inclination to

[1] *Deutsche Zeitung* of 12th October, 1918, morning edition : ' We wait for the hour of reckoning and affirm that we will reckon mercilessly and remorselessly with all the men who by demoralizing our people have assured a victory for democracy and defeat for Germany. *There is no one in so exalted a position*, that we will not hail him before the bar of history, *that we will not make him answer for* the monstrous events of the last few days. The needs of the hour demand that much shall be left unuttered at the moment which must eventually be uttered. . . . Germany's misfortunes began in the year 1890, when Germany was sent off to Sachsenwald.' 12th October, evening edition : ' To-day . . . the other elements of our present age are coming to take from the Kaiser sceptre and crown. It would be mistaken to-day to regret this. *One who lets the sceptre be snatched from his hand is not worthy to bear it. For us remains only the question : What will become of our Empire ? . . .* '

[2] Max Weber, *Gesammelte politische Schriften*, Munich, 1921, p. 477. Max Weber to Schulze-Gaevernitz on 11th October, 1918. Max Weber made a similar utterance in a speech shortly after the Revolution and added that the throne of the Hohenzollerns had grown too narrow for Wilhelm II., it could only now bear a child.

withdraw ; I heard this in the course of several conversations with Herr von Berg. Once the Chief of the Civil Cabinet urged me to spare the Kaiser. I asked him in astonishment how he supposed that possible. The terrible situation in which we found ourselves was not of a kind to spare any of us, the Kaiser least of all. Berg only repeated his words and added : ' The Kaiser is playing with the idea of abdication, and if the Kaiser abdicates, all the German Federal Princes will have to follow suit.' I did not follow up these remarks of Herr von Berg. My task, as I then conceived it, was to bring Kaiser and people together again, and the wave of public confidence which greeted my Chancellorship strengthened me in the hope that I should succeed.

I could only recommend to His Majesty discretion in speech and deeds which would make clear to the people that the authority of the Kaiser was behind the Cabinet's will for reforms, and would overcome all the obstacles which the soldiers and/or the bureaucracy would place in our way. I was confident of the success that certain actions of the Kaiser might have ; among others I thought of a possible change in the Civil Cabinet. I hoped to induce him to recall Herr von Valentini ; his dismissal, as is well known, had been extorted from the Kaiser by the Supreme Command because he was supposed to be a supporter of a peace of understanding.

I had made an appointment with His Majesty for 6th October. This was the only calm discussion I had with him during my Chancellorship.

The Kaiser was suffering from sciatica and received me in bed. Every single decision which I asked of him was obviously distasteful to him, in particular the replacing of the Minister of War and of the two Generals. It was obviously painful to him to have these decisions forced upon him.

I tried to make the Kaiser see that he would find firm ground under his feet again as soon as the obstacles which stood between him and the confidence of his people were removed. Certainly the political situation was full of danger ;

a far-sighted policy must try to remove causes of irritation and to spoil the revolutionaries' game.

The Kaiser appeared to assent to these arguments. But when I pointed out the necessity of replacing Herr von Berg by a personality who was known to be more favourably inclined to the present Government than was the present head of the Civil Cabinet, I met with a decisive refusal : the choice of the head of the Civil Cabinet was exclusively the prerogative of the Crown.

I replied that I was entirely of his opinion, but I must remind him that this prerogative had been infringed by the Supreme Command, when General Ludendorff last January had put to the Kaiser the ultimatum that he would resign if His Majesty did not dismiss Herr von Valentini. This interference with the rights of the Crown had seriously damaged the prestige of the monarchy ; the General had threatened resignation at the moment when he well knew that the Kaiser was not in a position to let him resign. Now was the time to make good this act of coercion. It was the recall of Herr von Valentini which I was proposing to His Majesty. I said that I was well aware that the Kaiser looked on Herr von Berg as a personal friend, whom he would be very unwilling to see pass out of his immediate environment. At the time when Herr von Valentini's dismissal was approved he, too, had been designated by the Kaiser as a friend ; thus, I hoped that the former head of the Civil Cabinet, if recalled, would fill the post adequately, even from a personal point of view. His Majesty seemed pleased with this solution ; but he asked me whether Hindenburg and Ludendorff might not be expected to make difficulties. I could reassure him, having already made the necessary inquiries.

I returned from my conversation with the Kaiser under the confident impression that he was going to work loyally with the Parliamentary Government. Haeften assured me again and again about this time that General Ludendorff had the like intention. I had no fear of political interference on the part of the General. But I could never rid myself of an uneasy feeling of doubt as to whether Ludendorff still

possessed the necessary elasticity of mind to direct the fate of the German army at this moment. At least, I thought that in the coming weeks his military recommendations should not any longer be in themselves decisive. Still less did I want to be entirely dependent on the Foreign Office in my judgment of the external situation.[1] The sources of information upon which I had had to rely on entering office had left me with a strong sense of insecurity.

Thus I intended to summon General von Lossberg to Berlin and gave instructions that a conference of the leading ambassadors should also be called together in Berlin. Rosen (The Hague) and Count Rantzau (Copenhagen) were to be had immediately, Count Metternich was staying in Berlin anyhow, Count Bernstorff could not yet be spared from Constantinople.

My wish to tap new sources of military advice at once provoked indignant protest from the Supreme Command. General Ludendorff declared himself ready to come to

[1] This feeling is given lively expression in a minute dating from the earliest days of my Chancellorship :

'. . . It is now clear that throughout the deliberations of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (1st-3rd October) the Chancellor had no authoritative information, on which to base his decisions, upon any of the following points :

(*a*) The morale of the German troops.

(*b*) The possibility of restoring once more, by means of a great national movement, our old fighting power.

(*c*) The condition of the enemy fronts and, in particular, conditions behind the enemy fronts ; and the view taken of them in neutral military circles. From this I conclude : For the conference between the military and the Chancellor, which must be held at the end of next week to decide upon the answer which is to be given to Wilson's note, the Chancellor must be in a position to base his decision on a clear survey of the facts. With this end in view the following proposals are made :

1. The immediate summoning of General von Lossberg.

2. The immediate summoning of Hermann Stegemann.

3. An officer from the front who had had direct experience of the will to self-sacrifice still to be found in the great mass of the army, should be heard.

It is also clear that the information upon the international political situation which was laid before the Tuesday-Thursday Conferences was quite inadequate. The question whether it is better to proceed via Wilson or via England, whether the answer should be adapted to the mentality of the English workman or to the vanity of Wilson—even this question was left undiscussed, or treated quite superficially.'

Berlin within the next few days and to supply me with every kind of military information.

I was naturally willing to await the personal conversation with Ludendorff, but I did not feel reassured any more than did my Cabinet.

Our anxiety was increased by rumours with regard to General Ludendorff's health. Colonel Bauer was in Berlin on official business and had expressed himself very pessimistically to several heads of departments with regard to the General's condition.

Then in a moment the cry of alarm : ' Ludendorff must go ; he has lost his nerve,' got through to the public in spite of all the habits of discipline to which the Press had so patiently submitted for four whole years. Walter Rathenau wrote in the *Vossische Zeitung* ' (of 7th October 1918) under the heading :

' A Black Day '

' The step was premature.

We all are for peace. We, the few, have been warning and imploring, but no Government of ours would bring itself to look facts in the face.

Now they have let themselves be stampeded without due reflection and with the time not yet ripe.

When the army is in retreat, that is no time to begin negotiations ; you must first steady the front line.

The enemy should have been made to see that the new spirit in state and people can strengthen the hands and the will of the fighting line. Then Wilson should have been asked what he meant by some of the most specious of his Fourteen Points, in particular with regard to Alsace-Lorraine, Poland and Reparation for the Western territories. This premature request for an armistice was a mistake.

Our country is unviolated, its resources are not exhausted, its people is unwearied. We have gone back, but we have not been beaten.

Wilson's answer will come. It will be unsatisfactory—more than that, it will be a rebuff, humiliating and overbearing in its demands.

We must not be surprised if they demand from us the immediate evacuation of the West, even including Alsace-

Lorraine. Point Eight will be interpreted to mean at least the cession of Lorraine, probably also of Alsace. The "Polish Harbour" may well mean Danzig. The restoration of Belgium and Northern France can be construed into a disguised war indemnity to the tune of 50 milliards of marks.

Can they have failed to realize that? The man who lost his nerve must be replaced.

Why is it to be expected that Wilson's demands will be exaggerated in the Entente interpretation of them? Because it is believed that our spirit is broken.

What is broken and had to be broken is the impudent claim of a few men to dominate the world, to violate Law, to graft the aged and withered tree of Militarism and Feudalism upon the awakened peoples of the earth.

Unbroken is our will to free self-maintenance and self-determination. No court of arbitration in the world can give us work and raw material and space to live in—that can only be secured by a dignified and acceptable peace.

We are determined to make good any wrong we may have done at home or abroad; we have made a beginning with this task and will go on with it; but we will not let ourselves be wronged in our turn.

We ought to have begun with the consolidation and then gone on to the manifestoes; we have taken the opposite course; we cannot now go back, because we have to keep our word.

But if an unsatisfactory answer comes, an answer which cramps our movement and throttles our life, we must be prepared for it.

The people must be prepared to rise in the defence of the nation; a Ministry of Defence must be erected. These plans are only to be put into force if bitter necessity compels it, if we meet with a rebuff; but not a day can be lost.

Such a Ministry should not be attached to any existing department; it should consist of citizens and soldiers together and have far-reaching powers.

Its task would be threefold:

First of all it is to appeal to the people in the ungarnished language of truth. Let everyone offer himself who feels himself called to such a task; there will be enough elderly men to be found who are yet sound, full of a passionate patriotism, and ready to help their tired brothers at the front with all their powers of body and soul.

Secondly, all the "Field-greys," who are to-day to be met with in our towns, at the stations and on the railways, must go

back to the front, however hard it may be for many of them to have their well-earned leave cut short.

Lastly, the men capable of bearing arms must be combed out of the offices, the guard-rooms and the depots, in East and West, at the bases and at home. What use have we to-day for Armies of Occupation and Russian Expeditions? Yet at this moment we have hardly half of the total available troops upon the Western front.

Our front was worn out; when our front has been restored, we shall be offered different conditions.

It is not war we desire but peace; and yet not a peace of abject submission.'

It was a cry from the heart of a great patriot, and stung me to the quick. Since the 5th I had been trying to take up my stand upon the facts of the situation as they were, to look forward and not backward to the struggle which I had carried on against the armistice offer and lost. Now this was a torment to me, and I kept asking myself again and again: had I really done my very utmost to prevent that 'over-hasty step.'

Years later I heard from friends how on 2nd October Rathenau had cried like a child, and lashed his inventive mind with the question whether he could not do anything to hold up the armistice offer. Had he but come to me then! This was an ally whom I could have used.

Rathenau's article caused a great sensation among the public; they were startled by the words of mistrust which it directed against Ludendorff and against Wilson.

We at once proceeded to discuss the *levée en masse* in the Cabinet. The underlying idea was certainly right—at this moment the voluntary principle would accomplish more than compulsion. There were still forces which could be brought up to renew the front. But such a *levée en masse* as Carnot's is no longer practicable. It would have caused irremediable confusion in our war organisation. The Minister of War alone can undertake the proper distribution of forces and must keep them firmly under his control. I had the greatest expectations of General Scheüch whom the Kaiser had in view for the post of War Minister. As head of the Ministry of Munitions he had gained a deep insight

into our economic life and had come into close contact with employers and employees.

On the same day I received a comprehensive memorandum upon the state of opinion in the countries of the Allies. It seemed but to provide a terrible confirmation of Rathenau's words : ' Why will Wilson's demands be exaggerated in the interpreting ? Because they think our spirit is broken.'

The Press comments of the time before the offer show clearly how the change in our internal and external politics would have affected the enemy, had it come without the simultaneous declaration of military bankruptcy. Everywhere there prevailed the greatest tension as to what the new Chancellor might say, as to the concessions which Germany might make.

Lord Robert Cecil spoke in an interview of the 2nd October as follows : [1]

> ' Probably *one single declaration* from the mouth of a leading German statesman would suffice to bring the world nearer to the desired goal. He would have to furnish a convincing assurance that *Belgium would be evacuated and restored to her former position of absolute independence*, and that the remaining problems would, on the conclusion of peace, be adjusted *without annexations and without indemnifications*, and with due regard to the right of self-determination of the peoples concerned ; finally, that measures would be taken to prevent a recurrence of war, by means of disarmament, courts of arbitration and the establishment of a League of Nations. In spite of the striking reversal which is now taking place in the German attitude of mind, *no German statesman* has as yet declared his allegiance to the new world ideal.'

I will not attempt to judge whether the intentions of this wily idealist were good or bad in the moment when he made such a clear confession of readiness for a peace of understanding. The point is that it is the utterance of a statesman who still believes that the power of the enemy is unbroken and feels by no means sure of his own victory.

The personalities of the new Government were no less of

[1] Interview with the London Correspondent of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*. My italics.

interest to the English public than the expected change of direction. The English Liberal papers were making quotations from Solf's speeches and mine.

Massingham wrote shortly before my appointment in the *Nation :*

> ' I see one such rescuing figure, and that is Prince Max of Baden, who is now spoken of as Count Hertling's successor. There at least is the promise of moral distinction . . . If this man is to speak as Chancellor of the German Empire, a new fact has indeed arisen.'

After our offer the cause of a peace of understanding was lost. We could not conceal our critical situation from foreign countries even for 24 hours. The request for an armistice worked like magic ; no one had dreamed of any such overwhelming event. Morel's little groups held their colours high, but they had no fight left in them, they could only demonstrate. The opportunists made haste to publish to the world the news of their conversion ; Lansdowne spoke against the granting of an armistice which could give the enemy time to consolidate his forces.

The words and actions of the German Government were treated as mere symptoms of the military situation.

The malicious joy of the war-mongers took hysterical forms : ' Now we've got them ' said Northcliffe, and the American yellow press wrote : [1]

> ' We have laid down one condition of war—one only—and that is to use force, force to the utmost, force without stint or limit, until we shall have destroyed forever in this world the indecent, intolerable, criminal thing that now holds out its dripping hands.'

France breathed again, as if she had only just been saved from peril of death, but she did not let herself go as did England and America.[2] Her cry of joy was rather a war-cry

[1] *New York Tribune*, 7th October, 1918.

[2] According to a Reuter message from Washington, MacCumber moved a resolution in the Senate that *before* the armistice Germany should be required to demobilize her army, hand over her fleet, make compensation for the loss of the ships that had been sunk, restore Alsace-Lorraine and pay back to France the indemnity of 1870.

to rally her forces. With a merciless clarity the French saw through to the origin of our armistice offer.

> ' In this haste to ask for an armistice, without waiting even twenty-four hours longer for the Reichstag to assemble, in this speech, which reflects the desire to reassure the anxious Members of Parliament upon the fate of army and people, have we not clear proofs that the Government and the Supreme Command regarded *military collapse as inevitable* ? '

Thus writes Marshal Foch [1] in retrospect, but he is only repeating in substance the French comments of the time.

In conclusion I might say that my worst fears as to the effect of the armistice offer upon the enemy peoples were more than realized. President Wilson now remained the one slender ray of hope. Only if he had the will and the power to keep the word which he had plighted to humanity in the teeth of the rulers of the Entente and of his own people, could the offer lead to the result which its sponsors hoped of it.

On 8th October it was announced that Wilson's answer would shortly arrive. The intimations which the Foreign Office received from neutral countries as to the conditions which Wilson would demand for the granting of the armistice sounded bad. From the beginning I had counted upon his demanding the evacuation of Belgium and North France. Now I expected something worse ; perhaps even the surrender of Alsace-Lorraine would be required. This time I wanted to be better informed than I had been eight days before as to the military situation upon which our decisions had to be based.

General Ludendorff was expected to arrive in the next few days. The question of our reserves would have to be carefully discussed. The General would have to give us the most precise information possible as to how long we could hold out if our allies deserted us. Could he bring the enemy advance to a standstill ? That was the fundamental question, and the answer would turn the scales as to whether we were

[1] *Die Gegenseite, Stimmen des Auslandes zum Krieg und Frieden*, No. 1. *Der Irrtum des Marschal Foch*, Berlin, 1919, p. 27, note. Italics mine.

to refuse or accept a demand for evacuation. I prepared a detailed questionnaire ; it was to be submitted to Ludendorff immediately on his arrival ; we should then consider the answer in the Cabinet.

'BERLIN,
8th October, 1918.[1]

TO GENERAL LUDENDORFF,

It is expected that the answer of the President of the United States of America to our request for peace and armistice will contain neither a simple acceptance nor a simple rejection, but will put conditions on which the further action of the President is to depend.

We must reckon with the possibility that these conditions will be hard. We are therefore placed before the question whether our military situation allows us to try and obtain a mitigation of the conditions through negotiation, at the risk of a delay of several weeks, in the course of which Austria-Hungary and Turkey may desert us, and after which we may even so have eventually to accept the President's conditions in their original form.

In order to form a true picture of our military situation I should be obliged to Your Excellency for an immediate answer to the following questions :

1. How long can our army contain the enemy beyond the German frontier—in its present positions, or in the course of a gradual retirement ?
2. Must we still reckon with the possibility of a military collapse before the spring, and if so, could such a collapse occur even in the course of the next three or four weeks ?
3. How long may the present critical situation be expected to last ? Will the crisis be past when the enemy is compelled to give up attacks *en masse*, and when will this probably take place ?
4. After the crisis has been past, can we count on being able to consolidate our front, and by what means can such consolidation be assured ?
5. What are the conditions as to reserves and supplies ?
6. If the present peace action should fail, could the war be

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 36. A verbal answer to the first seven questions was given in the session of 9th October (see below, p. 66 ff). On 11th October answers to the whole questionnaire were sent in writing by Ludendorff from General Headquarters, cf. *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 43.

carried on by us alone till the spring, in spite of the desertion of one of the two allies that remain to us ?

7. Does the Supreme Command expect that an adequate reinforcement would be afforded by the *levée en masse*, as recommended by Walter Rathenau in the *Vossische Zeitung* ?

According to the information received to date, it appears not impossible that President Wilson will demand the evacuation of Belgium and Northern France as a condition preliminary to the opening of negotiations ; the following questions therefore arise :

1. Would the Supreme Command recommend us to accept such a demand unconditionally, or to answer it with counter-conditions ? Such possible conditions—if the military situation viewed in the light of the above considerations should admit of protracted negotiations—might be, for instance :
   (*a*) The territories occupied by France and England—Upper Alsace and possibly also the German colonies—to be evacuated at the same time.
   (*b*) Guarantees to be given that the enemy does not follow. We may perhaps demand that the French territory evacuated by us be occupied only by American troops, that Belgium be occupied by Belgian troops only, its neutrality be recognized by all belligerents and that Belgian soil be not again used for purposes of war.
   (*c*) A declaration to be made by us that we should have to recall our troops from the regions occupied by us in the East (Kurland, Lithuania, Poland and the Ukraine), to compensate for the disadvantage to our strategic situation in the West—thus handing over these regions to Bolshevism.
2. What length of time would the evacuation of Northern France and Belgium require, if it were to begin with the signing of the armistice ?
3. After the evacuation should we still be in a position with the forces then at our disposal to defend the German-French frontier, should the peace negotiations subsequently collapse and the enemy take the offensive afresh ?

President Wilson might, on the plea that he needed securities, demand the occupation of German fortresses on our Western frontier :

1. In view of the military situation should we be compelled to accept such a demand ?

2. How far should the acceptance of such conditions be made dependent upon counter-conditions ?

MAX, PRINCE OF BADEN,
Imperial Chancellor.'

The evening bulletin of the eighth sounded even reassuring ; the danger of a penetration or an encircling of our line really seemed to be over for the present. Col. von Haeften admitted that the offer had been, from a military point of view, unnecessary. I can hardly describe what a blow this admission was to me. Why had not the Supreme Command grasped at the life-line which I threw them ? Why did they not grant me the eight days' delay which I demanded and which would have sufficed for reflection ? On 8th October no such offer would have been made.

CHAPTER III

WILSON'S ANSWER TO OUR SECOND NOTE

Chancellorship Crisis.

On the ninth the appointment of the War Minister Gen. Scheüch was announced. Herr von Valentini, however, was not recalled. His Majesty informed me to my great surprise that the proposal had fallen through; he had met with unexpected opposition from his family. He believed himself to have found a good substitute in the Prussian Minister Clemens von Delbrueck.

In the course of the morning I received President Wilson's answer.

'The Department of State,
8th October, 1918.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge, on behalf of the President, your Note of 6th October enclosing a communication from the German Government to the President; and I am instructed by the President to request you to make the following communication to the Imperial German Chancellor:

Before making reply to the request of the Imperial German Government, and in order that that reply should be as candid and straightforward as the momentous interests involved require, the President of the United States deems it necessary to assure himself of the exact meaning of the Note of the Imperial Chancellor. Does the Imperial Chancellor mean that the Imperial German Government accepts the terms laid down by the President in his address to the Congress of the United States on the 8th January last, and in subsequent addresses, and that its object in entering into discussions would be only to agree upon the practical details of their application?

The President feels bound to say, with regard to the suggestion of an armistice, that he would not feel at liberty to propose

a cessation of arms to the Governments with which the Government of the United States is associated against the Central Powers so long as the armies of those Powers are upon their soil. The good faith of any discussion would manifestly depend upon the consent of the Central Powers immediately to withdraw their forces everywhere from invaded territory.

The President also feels that he is justified in asking whether the Imperial Chancellor is speaking merely for the constituted authorities of the Empire who have so far conducted the war. He deems the answers to these questions vital from every point of view.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my high consideration.

ROBERT LANSING.

The note appeared to justify the optimists. It is true that the demand for evacuation was made, as had been feared, and that we were to accept the Fourteen Points as *conditions* and not as a mere *basis* for negotiation. Then, too, his question to the German Government: In whose name do you speak? was an interference of Wilson's in our internal affairs. But in spite of all that, the prevailing impression at the time was, that the note spoke in a different tone from the howl of rage to which the yellow press of the Allies had given vent. Wilson did not refuse and was ready to undertake mediation.

Solf went so far as to declare that if the Chancellor's speech of 5th October had been made in its original form, the answer could not have been so conciliatory.[1]

[1] Solf expressed himself on 12th October in Committee of the Federal Council as follows: He regarded Wilson as an honourable man, who had not yet given up hope of winning the peace-maker's fame. For this very reason it was to him that the first note had been directed. He, Solf, had at first been of the opinion that the note ought not to be addressed to Wilson only; after the success which the step had had, he must admit that the men who had advised the sending of the note to Wilson had been right. As regards the Eighth Point, the only object of this demand was to bring the question of Alsace-Lorraine once more before the bar of history. He, Solf, did not believe in any intention to take it away and assign it to France—that would be a peace of violence such as Wilson did not wish to see brought about, even by his allies. The same considerations which applied to Alsace-Lorraine applied also to Poland. The unconditional sacrifice of Poland could not be construed out of the acceptance *en bloc* of the Fourteen points. (From the report of the Brunswick Delegate, Herr Boden.)

There were three possible answers to Wilson :

1. We could consent to the evacuation, but refuse the unconditional acceptance of the Fourteen Points, coming forward now with our interpretation of them.
2. We could simply refuse the evacuation.
3. We could assent to both demands, adding in reply to his inquiries a short disquisition upon Constitutional Law.

The first course was no longer open to us ; our reservations must have been defined on 5th October. To announce them now might give the President ground for suspecting the good faith of the German offer and thus for refusing or temporizing. No one knew at the time whether Wilson would be sufficiently strong-minded and well-disposed to maintain his principles in the teeth of American public opinion. Perhaps he was only waiting for a pretext for a change of front, particularly as the elections for Congress were imminent.

Only the report from the military could decide whether we were in a position to refuse evacuation.

General Ludendorff had arrived on 9th October. I saw him shortly before the meeting. He did not give the impression of being shaken in health.

I thought it necessary to remind him of the way in which the armistice offer had originated—I who was already being called the ' Pacifist Prince,' and being made responsible for the armistice request. I told the General that, to avoid disclosing our weakness still more, I was not in a position to lay bare the true state of affairs before the public—that I was now obliged to cover the armistice offer with my name. The General replied : ' I thank Your Grand-Ducal Highness in the name of the Supreme Command and in the name of the Army.'

In the course of the meeting [1] General Ludendorff gave a verbal answer to the questions which had been sent him on 8th October :

[1] Cf. *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 38.

Question : How long can our army contain the enemy beyond the German frontier—in its present position or in the course of a gradual retirement ?

Answer : Frontier a long way behind Western front, we can protect it for a long time yet. Attacks in Lorraine possible, I see no danger for Lorraine frontier. I see no danger from Holland, since troops who might cross the frontier would be interned.

Question : Must we still reckon with the possibility of a military collapse before the spring, and if so, could such a collapse occur even in the course of the next three or four weeks ?

Answer : Danger of a penetration always exists. The English could have broken through our lines with their first tank attack.

Question : How long is the present critical situation expected to last ? Will the crisis be past when the enemy is compelled to give up attacks *en masse*, and when will this probably take place ?

Answer : Yes, only attacks *en masse* are dangerous.

Question : After the crisis has been past, can we count on being able to consolidate our front, and by what means can such consolidation be assured ?

Answer : If the attacks are given up, the danger is past.

Question : What are the conditions as to reserves and supplies ?

Answer : Our reserves are short by 70,000 men a month.[1] There is a sufficiency of supplies.

Question : Does the Supreme Command expect that an adequate reinforcement would be afforded by the *levée en masse*, as recommended by Walter Rathenau in the *Vossische Zeitung ?* [2]

Answer : No. In spite of our lack of men I have no belief in the *levée en masse*. What we always wanted was an increase of working efficiency. I am not able to judge whether

[1] In *Amtliche Urkunden* erroneously reported : ' We are short *at the moment* of 70,000 men.'

[2] *Vide supra*, p. 55 ff.

shirkers could be got hold of by this method. In the view of the Supreme Command the Garrison Service classification should be given up ; on the present system the man once passed for Garrison Service will fight no more. Through a more rigorous combing-out at home we could get more men. The *levée en masse* would cause more disturbance than we can stand.

Question : If the present peace action should fail, could the war be carried on by us alone till the spring, in spite of the desertion of one of the two allies that remain to us ?

I received the answer : We need a breathing-space ; after that we can re-form.

In other words, I asked : can we hold out if we do *not* obtain a breathing-space ? and received the answer : Yes, if we obtain a breathing-space, we can hold out.

Our situation was therefore dark and difficult indeed.

General Ludendorff did not contradict Colonel Heye as he said : ' For the Supreme Command not to hasten on the peace negotiations would be playing a mere game of chance. . . . Yesterday the penetration of our line came within a hairbreadth of succeeding.' But unquestionably the Supreme Command ' felt less nervous ' to-day than on 3rd October.[1] Then the cry had been : ' Make haste—or we expect the catastrophe ; ' to-day : ' The catastrophe is possible but we hope it will be averted.' In General Ludendorff's replies a note of optimism could be detected ; and this change of mood had a basis in facts. In the past few days the enemy could have broken through, particularly near St. Quentin, but did not. Our front had the feeling that the enemy infantry was not doing all it might, but was saving its strength, or was being held back. We know to-day that the allied leaders lacked the will to compel a decision regardless of cost.

But his experience of recent battles by no means led Ludendorff to the conclusion that negotiations must be broken off ; the possibility of rejecting the demand for

[1] Cf. *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 42 : Conversation in the Chancellery of 11th October, 1918.

evacuation was not even touched upon.[1] And yet he saw as clearly as did the Admiralty the dangers which would threaten our industrial districts were the enemy air bases to be transferred to our frontier. It is true he thought it preferable that only the Belgians should be allowed to follow us ; but when I asked whether, if French or English troops should enter Belgium, negotiations with the Entente should be broken off, he answered with a decisive negative. The real truth was that General Ludendorff believed that he could hold the frontiers if the army could be led back in good order, but not if it had been beaten back.[2] It was not a breathing-space at any price that he wanted ; he was resolute not to accept such terms as the surrender of the fortress of Metz ; but he still cherished the illusion that the enemy would be only too pleased to grant us the respite of an honourable armistice. His continual refrain was : ' The army needs rest.'

[1] That General Ludendorff at this time maintained the point of view here described, is clear from the following letter of Rathenau's (Rathenau, *Briefe*, Vol. II., p. 111) to Captain W. Breucker, dated Berlin, 15th January, 1919 : ' First I may remark that I have a very high opinion of Ludendorff's greatness as a strategist and strength of will, and I am convinced that had he listened to my exposition of the political situation and of the question of the U-boat war in July of 1917, all would have been well. It is bad for us that he was so ill-advised, and that his knowledge of human nature did not save him from following this advice. In answer to your contentions, I should like to say that I do not agree that Ludendorff was determined to continue the struggle if the conditions were found to be too hard. I am in a position to prove the opposite. On the occasion of his first visit to Berlin after the armistice offer, an intimate friend of his went to see him at the instigation of a small group to which I belonged, to ask him about the military situation. We arranged that he should be asked point blank whether he was aware that the armistice offer would mean the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and possibly of Upper Silesia, and in any case would involve a heavy war indemnity. He answered the first and third question in the affirmative, to the second he remarked that this was the concern of the Government, adding repeatedly that there was nothing to be done, the front needed rest. Not till ten days afterwards was he of the opinion that the struggle *could* have been carried on. He also declared in the course of the conversation that his health had been bad, but that he was now entirely recovered. . . . '

[2] Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting of 11th October, 1918. Count Roedern : ' . . . The evacuation involves a great risk, but to judge from the utterances of the High Command the risk that we shall otherwise run is very much greater.' Erzberger : ' General Ludendorff has repeatedly declared that the army needs rest, that it can be relied upon to hold the frontiers if it is led back in good order, but not if it is beaten back.'

Colonel Heye maintained :

> ' It is the urgent request of the High Command that there should be no talk of " Loss of Nerve." A step towards peace, and still more towards armistice, was absolutely necessary. The troops had no chance of rest. One could not tell whether the troops would hold out or not. Every day brought new surprises. He was not afraid of a catastrophe. He wanted to save the army, so that we could use it to bring pressure to bear on the enemy during the peace negotiations.
>
> The army needed rest. If it got rest and reinforcement, it would be capable of further efforts.'

His words sounded almost as if the ideas of the Generals had been subconsciously influenced by memories of the days of a more gentleman-like warfare—when the lines faced each other in battle array, while parleys were held about engagement and armistice. These days were over.

In estimating our chances General Ludendorff rightly regarded the question of reserves as decisive. He demanded 70,000 men a month. Scheüch had only been appointed War Minister on the same day, and had not yet completed his investigations as to the number of men he could supply, and at what intervals he could supply them. Thus the discussion ended without a clear view on this decisive question being reached.

On the next day (10th October) the War Minister was in a position to make Ludendorff the following offer : 600,000 men could be made available—not at once but within so many weeks. To take the soldiers away from industry must naturally lead to a certain decrease in the supplies of munitions. Inevitable, too, would be the diminution of the regular monthly drafts. Then, too, the War Minister did not leave us in doubt as to the poor fighting value of this human material ; for instance, the 1900 class was only partially trained. This offer of Scheüch's met with the reply : ' Then rather wait.' However, two days later a message was sent from Headquarters that General Ludendorff had changed his mind, and would like to have the 600,000 men as quickly as possible.

The obvious conclusion that the Government must draw from these views of the military was that the armistice action was to be continued, which meant that the demand for evacuation must be assented to in principle. Ritter von Mann, the Minister of Marine, reminded us again on 12th October of the 'danger which threatened the German industrial districts from enemy guns and aeroplanes.' But he, too, gave in to the views of the Supreme Command. His words were:

> 'I have only brought forward this consideration to withdraw it again out of regard for the position which the Supreme Command has taken up.'[1]

But outside the ranks of the Government a movement for breaking off the negotiations began to raise its head.

Count Westarp paid General Ludendorff and me a visit, in which he demanded in the name of his party the rejection of the evacuation demand.

Walter Rathenau gave us a further warning—not this time addressed to the public, but contained in a letter to the War Minister:

'BERLIN,
9th October, 1918.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

First of all my hearty congratulations, which are not due to you alone, but to us all.

I beg to recapitulate in the shortest possible form my considerations of yesterday, now that Wilson's answer has brought the demand for evacuation which we had foreseen.

Apart from the danger of disorder on the march home, the evacuation seals the abandonment of our defence, and is as good as a surrender at discretion. It is by no means impossible that after the evacuation new demands that we cannot avert will be made, either by means of strained interpretations of the Wilson points, or even quite openly in the name of the other members of the Entente.

The question, therefore, is, whether we are so near the end of our strength that we must bow to such a fate, or can we—after suitable reorganization—hold the front at least six to nine months longer?

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 45.

The objection that still worse will follow upon a collapse so postponed, cannot be made, since there *is* nothing worse than surrender at discretion, and in the course of 200 days some more favourable moment must in any case occur of which we can take advantage. If we hold out six months, this means that we can under certain circumstances hold out much longer still. Experience tells us, first: things are not half as bad as they seem, and secondly: if you make a man put off suicide for an hour, he gives up the idea, and it never comes back to him.

I will not waste words upon the mistakes that have been made. Even the completest loss of nerve is not the shadow of an excuse for having chosen the form of a request for armistice instead of simply demanding an explanation of the Fourteen Points.

Can we afford to wait the six or nine months? The balance of man-power is in my view the following:

1. If the peace of Brest Litovsk were revised—and a revision is urgently demanded by political considerations—it would mean the freeing of several hundred thousand men.
2. A comb-out at home, at the bases and also at the front, will produce so far as I can estimate 200,000 men.
3. There are half a million men on leave to be sent back.
4. The 1900 class will still yield a respectable remainder.
5. An appeal to the older men, even with the most rigorous exclusion of the physically and mentally unfit, will produce over a hundred thousand men.

Industry and transport must not suffer any further loss.

The total to be disposed of will then be something like one to one and a half million men.

Should we lose the control of the Rumanian and Galician oil (before such occurrence as much as possible must be transported to the refineries of the interior and there stored) we must allege general humanitarian grounds for giving up submarine warfare, which, anyhow, no longer has—and in my opinion never did have—any serious importance.

The organization responsible for the direction of the war must be altered. To-day the Supreme Command and the Parliamentary Government have to deal with each other immediately. If they continue on their present course, an undesirable interference of the Parliamentary Government in the affairs of the Supreme Command will arise. The appropriate link between them is the Ministry of War which must be to some extent "parliamentarised" and, if possible, transformed into a Ministry of Defence which would suggest to the

outer world ideas of *levée en masse* and of a people's war. It must therefore act as link alike between Government and Front, and between Army and People. This can be secured by associating with it in a War Council or War Committee the civilian and Labour elements in the new Government.

At the front, too, certain reforms are necessary to quell the prevalent dissatisfaction ; they would be primarily concerned with rations, labour-saving, re-distribution of the young officers and steps to counteract the growing ill-feeling between the younger officers and the men.

Finally I permit myself a remark which perhaps goes beyond the limits of the allowable. Lieutenant-Colonel Koeth is the most competent, the most brilliant, and the most capable officer at handling men and bodies of men that I know ; I suggest that as Under-Secretary of a Ministry of Defence he would be the right man in the right place.

In sincere devotion,

Your Excellency's obedient servant,

RATHENAU.'

On 10th October Stresemann demanded on behalf of the National-Liberal Party ' that before a decision upon the fateful question on which the future of the German Empire and people would depend was reached, the Generals and their staffs must be required to give their views as to the present military situation, both personally and in writing.' Neither he nor his party could be ' reassured ' by the statement, which I had made, to the effect that Ludendorff had assured himself of his agreement with Kuhl, Lossberg and Schulenburg before leaving Headquarters.

For me the verdict of General Ludendorff was conclusive. Rathenau, Count Westarp and Stresemann still counted on our being able to bring the battle to a standstill on *enemy soil*. But this was a fundamental error ; General Ludendorff left no room for doubt that we should have to go back to the frontiers—whether under pressure of the enemy or in execution of an agreement to evacuate.

Apart from this I was horrified to hear that the positions on the Meuse had not been dug. Thus the terrible threat to our industrial districts would have to be faced sooner or later, while the conditions of the struggle on the frontiers

would be more favourable if we could disengage ourselves from the enemy and obtain a breathing-space. Demands which had the object of making a resumption of hostilities impossible for us must be rejected ; on that point the agreement on 9th and 10th October between Government and Supreme Command was complete.

The ' question which would determine Germany's whole future ' had not yet been raised again ; we had been placed before this ' fateful question ' on 29th September, and we would have to deal with it again when the conditions came which meant to disarm and dishonour us.

I, therefore, was at one with Ludendorff that we should evacuate rather than break off negotiations. One sought consolation in a consideration which went beyond the horizon of the merely military-technical outlook. The moral conditions of the last desperate struggle would act unfavourably upon the Allies and favourably upon us—they would be carrying the war into Germany after the liberation of Belgium and North France was complete, while we should be defending our own soil. The capacity for suffering and resistance which France had shown in the last four years almost surpassed the humanly possible and was only to be explained by the fact that the French were defending ' la belle patrie ' against an invading enemy. General Ludendorff was quite right in the demand he made on a later occasion that the soldier in Belgium should realize that he was defending German soil.[1] Our task now was to call the primitive human passions to our help. They would be called up to greater purpose if our armies were to take up their position for a fight of desperation on the German frontier.[2]

[1] *Vide infra* p. 112.

[2] On 11th October I received through the Prussian Minister of the Interior Drews a report from the President von der Schulenburg upon the state of feeling in the Province of Saxony. The report ended with the memorable words : ' . . . Should things subsequently come to a continuation of the struggle, the greatest possible efforts will have to be made to influence the people, if the war spirit is to be restored and the spirit of free self-sacrifice, which has unfortunately almost disappeared, to be aroused again.'

My colleagues were all finally convinced that it was necessary to answer the note in such a way as to make it impossible for Wilson to break off. The text which had been drafted by Simons won general agreement. Only an important addition, demanded by the Supreme Command, provoked any controversy :

> ' The German Government assumes that the other Governments concerned agree with it in basing themselves on President Wilson's pronouncements. . . . ' [1]

At first Solf and I had been opposed to these words and had intended to ask President Wilson formally before the conclusion of the armistice whether the Allies accepted the Fourteen Points or not ; but I was convinced by the representative of the Supreme Command that we ought to make use of this first opportunity which presented itself to make the demand for the Allies to be bound by his programme. In the discussion Col. von Haeften received vigorous and effective support from Erzberger. Hindenburg on the night of 11th October had informed us of the great importance which he attached to this addition. To-day it is clear to me that by attaching this condition to our acceptance of the Wilson programme we but gave the President a handle for asking the Allies how they intend to deal with the Fourteen Points. Complicated discussions were necessary before he could announce on 5th November that the Allies, too, had bound themselves to accept the Fourteen Points with two exceptions.

I have often been asked what good has the agreement of the Fourteen Points been to us ? That it has been violated in the Versailles Treaty again and again is universally recognized. I reply : In the points where it has been broken we are on sure legal ground in demanding revision.[2] The Agreement of 5th November has stamped the most intolerable provisions of the Versailles Treaty as a breach of public faith and thus made the fight for our rights really easier. But

[1] Cf. *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 41, of 11th October, 1918.

[2] Cf. Appendix V.

above all the Allies were compelled to give up or postpone certain of their war aims, which even the most daring hypocrisy could not undertake to bring into accord with a Wilson programme however distorted. We owe it to the Agreement of the Fourteen Points that the Rhineland and the Saar are still German.

Our second note went out into the world in the following form :

'BERLIN,
12th October, 1918.

In reply to the questions of the President of the United States of America, the German Government hereby declares :

The German Government has accepted the terms laid down by President Wilson in his Address of the 8th January and in his subsequent addresses as the foundation of a permanent peace of justice. Consequently the object of the proposed discussions would be only to come to an understanding upon practical details of the application of these terms.

The German Government assumes that the Governments of the Powers associated with the Government of the United States also adopt the position taken by President Wilson in his public declarations.

The German Government declares itself ready, in agreement with the Austro-Hungarian Government, with a view to bringing about an armistice, to comply with the proposals of the President in regard to evacuation. The German Government suggests that the President should bring about the meeting of a Mixed Commission, whose duty it would be to concert the necessary arrangements concerning the evacuation.

The present German Government, which takes the responsibility for this step towards peace, has been formed by negotiations and in agreement with the great majority of the Reichstag. The Chancellor, supported in all his actions by the will of this majority, speaks in the name of the German Government and of the German people.

SOLF,
Secretary of State for the Foreign Office.'

This note bore Solf's signature and not mine. A dramatic incident had led on 11th October to a Chancellorship crisis, and the dispatch of our answer could not wait for its solution.

The French had secured and published the letter

which I had written in January 1918 to Prince Alexander Hohenlohe.[1]

I have stated above that my aim then was to draw a sharp line between myself and the group of pacifists in Switzerland. This explains the extreme sharpness of many of the expressions. But in principle I could not even to-day disown the criticisms which I then made of peace resolutions and of the phrases taken from the Western nations. My embarrassment was now great, greater since I had been compelled on entering office to give up my own policy—I had to represent a Government which I had not formed and never would have formed, and to sign an offer which had been resolved upon without me and forced through in spite of me. The peace resolution which I there criticized was a challenge in comparison with our request for the armistice, and my Government had been formed according to an ultra-democratic scheme, unknown even in the parliamentarily-governed countries of the West. Up to now I had had no opportunity of confessing my own political creed which was thus brought to light by the Entente.

The letter had appeared at Berne on 9th October, 1918, in the Entente-managed *Freie Zeitung*. Havas and Reuter had taken it up, but the enemy countries at this moment were interested in Germany's military situation and not in the least in her Chancellor's private correspondence.

'It hardly seemed necessary,' said the *Nation*,[2] 'to answer Prince Max's Note by publishing (and presumably stealing) his private letters, but supposing these documents to be genuine, what do they show? Prince Max, Chancellor of the German Empire, is discovered to be in friendly correspondence with Prince Alexander of Hohenlohe, an advanced pacifist and an exile from his native land. It is much the same thing as if Mr. Lloyd George were discovered (*per impossibile*) to be in private relationship with Mr. Ramsay Macdonald. Naturally, Prince Max, in writing to a strong partisan, emphasizes his reserves rather than his points of agreement. Is that, too, an unknown or a guilty phenomenon?'

[1] *Vide supra*, Vol. I. p. 198 ff. [2] 12th October, 1918.

But in Germany the storm of excitement which the Entente had counted on broke out. Herr von Gerlach in the *Welt am Montag* of 14th October called the tune : ' The Chancellor must go.'

The letter caused great offence and alarm among my parliamentary colleagues and in the parties that supported them. We had been accustomed to class the prominent figures in public life as adherents either of the Majority Parties or of the ' Fatherland ' Party. The policy which condemned *both* peace offers *and* insolent war aims had certainly been clearly enough outlined in my speeches, but the Parliamentarians did not trouble themselves over such nice distinctions as these—my sympathies were already supposed to be with the Majority before I took office. Now in a moment all confidence in me seemed to have been undermined.

I resolved to call the Inter-party Committee together to confess my adherence to the substance of the letter, and to make a belated effort to trace my ' policy of the Third Line.' I wanted to win a new confidence on a firm basis, or resign.

All through 12th and 13th October the Interparty Committee was in a permanent state of session and aggrievance, complaining, judging, hearing expert opinion, first by itself in the Reichstag, then at Payer's [1]—at first the chosen few and then the full assembly—to receive my explanations, then later on to hear Solf and Count Rantzau who had arrived in the meantime, upon the effect of the letter abroad and my political character.

The dominating factor was the conscientious scruples of the Social Democrats as to remaining members of a Government headed by such a prince as this !

Scheidemann had already formulated a letter of resignation [2] which he brought with him and read aloud in the Committee. He added : All our party organs are unanimous that it is impossible for us to remain in the Cabinet. Wilson cannot be expected to treat any longer with such a Chancellor.

[1] Cf. Payer, *op. cit.* p. 130 ff.

[2] Printed in Scheidemann, *op. cit.* p. 182 f., cf. also the same, p. 177 f.

'I cannot deny that I have grown really fond of Prince Max in the last few days.'[1] But it was unthinkable that the Prince should be allowed to remain. Ebert seconded him; the Chancellor's policy had appeared to him to be consistent—this consistency had now been destroyed for ever.

Erzberger and Stresemann reminded them how inopportune a change of Chancellor would be; there were certain reforms which could only be secured by the Prince. Stresemann warned the Social Democrats against attempts at revolution.

Payer and Haussmann did their best to reassure Ebert and Scheidemann. The way they treated the affair would be a test of their ability to distinguish the essential from the trivial. Haussmann said there was no need to maintain that a poodle is an elephant because it is not a gnat. Once his patience deserted him, and he called out to Scheidemann: 'Show what you can do then, and break up the Cabinet—but wouldn't it be better to hear the Chancellor first?'

When I appeared at 5 o'clock in the afternoon at the meeting of the Inter-party Committee, an acute depression still reigned; the Social Democrats regarded my resignation as inevitable, and the majority of the other members obviously regarded my remaining in office as the lesser of two evils. At this point Haussmann added to his minutes: 'The scene changes to a tribunal.'[2] The 'accused' now read the following declaration:

> 'Gentlemen, those circles in the Entente countries whose one anxiety is that the war might soon stop, and who devote their whole energies to preventing the restoration of peace, have secured and published a letter to a private correspondent with the intention of discrediting the sincerity of the belief I have professed in a Peace of Justice, and in the development of democratic institutions. I did write the letter; whether it is really reproduced exactly, I am not in the position to say, since I have no copy of it. But in general it seems to be reproduced correctly.
>
> I must know whether this attempt to cast suspicion on me finds any echo here. But first I will give you a few facts which

[1] Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 248. [2] The same, *op. cit.* p. 249.

should clear up the question of my political sympathies and my political programme before I took office.

1. At the end of January 1917 I tried to secure that we should not begin the intensified submarine war, but should support the well-known Peace Note of President Wilson, even after the Entente rejection of it, by a German official declaration of war aims in which the restoration of Belgian sovereignty and integrity would figure as an essential point.

2. On 15th July, 1917, I submitted a proposal [1] as to the form in which the Chancellor, Herr Michaelis, should profess his adherence to the Peace Resolution. I quote: "Since its opening day the war Germany is fighting has been for me a war for freedom. He who is fighting for his own rights and freedom must have respect for the rights and the freedom of other peoples. Otherwise his own cause is not sacred to him. To my feeling, accordingly, all those plans which have had no regard to the rights and freedom of other nations, but have aimed at a position of hegemony for Germany, have falsified the motives which made the nation rise as one man. My own principles thus demand of me, that I should take my stand on the basis of your resolution. But I cannot conceal from you, gentlemen, that I deplore the moment you choose for once more proclaiming to the world the word 'understanding.'"

3. In February 1918 and before the offensive I urged an unequivocal declaration with regard to Belgium and an effort to fill out the framework of the Brest Litovsk peace honestly.

4. I repeated this demand at a time when we were at the high-water mark of our military successes.

These steps all sprang from the same fundamental principles. I have never wavered in my belief that Justice would prevail in this war. National interest no less than humanitarian sympathies required that we should inscribe upon our banners the name of Justice. For this reason I combated from the very beginning the Pan-German war aims, which only served to steel the enemy's power of resistence. I am just as much opposed to the programme which consists in having *no* programme, based on the view that we ought not to render the task of our negotiators more difficult by tying them down prematurely to particular conditions. I have considered all peace offers inopportune which have been directed to governments that will have nothing to do with a peace of justice—a

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 124 f.

peace which is compatible with the honour and security of all the various peoples.

The unequivocal declaration of our war aims before all the world was the programme for which I fought. I am in fact convinced that a timely declaration, in particular with regard to Belgium, would have opened the way to a peace of justice sooner than all advances that might be made to the enemy.

Now as to my attitude to internal politics.

Again I refer you to particular steps I have taken. At the end of June 1917 I urged the introduction of the universal, secret, equal and direct suffrage in Prussia.

In July 1917 I declared against a coalition ministry and for a Government which should plainly express the will of the Majority. It is true that I did not then think that the very far-reaching form of parliamentary control which we have to-day was then necessary.

I frankly admit that I was a declared opponent of the Committee of Seven for controlling each single step that the Government took. I believe that especially in a great democracy there is a place for leadership and for trusting one's leader. Commissions to control in detail the acts of the executive appear to me unjustifiable, except where the relation between Parliament and Government is one of distrust.

Gentlemen, presumably you do not expect me to tell you that the democratic programme which I represent to-day had already been worked out by me in this form before the war broke out. But in the course of the war my ideas have kept on developing in one straight line, and I will only maintain here that the programme which I represent with conviction to-day is a logical step in this development.

Even to-day I am against an uncritical taking over of Western institutions. I believe that evolution in Germany must proceed in accordance with its own inner laws. That this development has made and is in our days making irrevocable strides both in the sphere of constitutional usage and of administration, you are well aware, and I will not labour the point.

Gentlemen, I do not think that the lines of my political creed are entirely obliterated even in the letter to Prince Hohenlohe, even where everything is displaced and distorted in the careless style of an angry private letter. This is the answer to a letter of Prince Hohenlohe's in which, as also in his articles, he treats me as if I were an unconditional ally of his. I was anxious to draw a clear line of distinction here, and for this purpose to give expression to the then official point of view in the Belgian

question. I had, and still to-day have, the greatest respect for the warmth and sincerity of Prince Hohenlohe's will for peace, as I also have for his patriotism. The Entente does the Prince a wrong in labelling him as a German agent, and Germany does him a wrong when she treats him as an enemy of our cause.

It was not the aim that separated us but the method. I am unfortunately convinced that the frequent and public advances which he made towards the enemy benefited neither Germany nor the cause of peace. I was determined to avoid identifying myself with these methods in the eyes of friend and enemy; had I been once stamped as one of Prince Hohenlohe's company, my efforts, both public and confidential, for the peace policy which *I* conceived to be the right one, would have been impaired.

Even so this letter contains expressions, which even then did not adequately represent my conviction at the time, and which I more than anyone feel to be false and misleading. If this discrepancy between the hastily-scribbled lines of a letter to a relative on the one hand and the political programme which I have announced publicly and privately on the other, has led you to mistrust me, I beg you to tell me so unreservedly, so that I can draw the consequences. I can only take responsibility where I enjoy confidence; on it my effectiveness depends, both morally and in consequence of the new usage, constitutionally. But to-day it is equally important that I should possess the confidence of others, too. If once the conviction forces itself upon me that my person is an obstacle in the way of peace, I shall regard it as my duty in this as in any other such case, to lay down office.'[1]

I at once left the conference room, but even during my speech I had noticed a revulsion of feeling; the company asked for copies of the declaration to be used in dealing with their parties, and adjourned till the next morning.

On 13th October Ebert informed the assembled Inter-party Committee that the reading of the Chancellor's declaration had made a great impression on the Party Executive, but that before the final decision the party as a whole must be heard. Erzberger thereupon as spokesman of the High Command declared that they must refuse all responsibility for the

[1] In the mention of my attitude to the suffrage question (p. 81 *supra*) an error has crept in. Instead of 'the end of June,' I should have said 'the middle of July.'

military consequences of a change of Chancellor, and to my idea, this ought to have finished it. But the questions and discussions dragged on in the party rooms for days till at last the Social Democratic ministers received permission to remain in the Cabinet. Meanwhile Solf, supported by Count Rantzau, had tried to make clear to the gentlemen concerned the curious figure which we were cutting in the eyes of foreign countries ; they could not understand how we in our position could bring ourselves to waste so much energy and time over the affair of the letter.

CHAPTER IV

THE SECOND WILSON NOTE OF 14TH OCTOBER

On 12th October it became known that the 'Leinster,' a passenger steamer plying between England and Ireland, had been torpedoed. Hundreds of people were drowned, among them numbers of Americans and members of English Government circles, some of them with names known throughout the length and breadth of the land. For days the relatives stood on the shore to identify the corpses as they were washed up.

Since the days of the 'Lusitania' the sorrow and fury in England and America had never reached such heights. It is true that we had recalled the submarines from the American coast in time, but had unfortunately neglected to prevent a catastrophe of this kind, which as things stood might have been expected.

Our diplomats had given us fair warning. Romberg of Berne on 11th October passed on to us the advice which had been given him in confidence, that the submarine commanders at sea should be recommended to spare passenger ships, otherwise Wilson would not be able to hold out against the storm of indignation that would follow.[1] A private letter [2] of 12th October to Solf emphasized this warning.

> 'The only thing which at the moment could re-introduce serious complications would be if at this vital juncture the sinking by submarine of a ship with American passengers, etc., should occur. Considering the bad luck that our navy always has, such a thing does not seem impossible. A telegram in this sense was dispatched by our Minister to the Foreign Office.'

Solf had wanted to insist on fresh instructions being issued

[1] Cf. *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 68. [2] Cf. the same, No. 69.

to the submarine commanders, but the 'Leinster' disaster had already occurred, and Wilson was given good reason—or a good pretext—for yielding to the war-mongers.

We expected hourly the President's answer. Again its contents were anticipated in threatening messages. Wilson was said to have given way to the Allied military, and to have made the granting of the armistice dependent upon the abdication of the Kaiser.

On 14th October came Prince Adalbert and Prince August Wilhelm in a great state of excitement to tell me of the wild rumours that were flying around Berlin with regard to the Kaiser's abdication. Prince Adalbert asked straight out: 'Shall I go to Papa and make clear to him the necessities of the situation?' Prince August Wilhelm made a deprecating gesture. I said that I did not consider any such step desirable; I hoped as long as I was Chancellor that I would succeed in avoiding a situation such as would make the Kaiser's abdication necessary.

On the night of 15th-16th October I wrote to my cousin, the Grand Duke of Baden. I give the essential passages of this private letter because it is characteristic of the deceitful hopes and anxious forebodings of this time.

'BERLIN,
15th October, 1918.

MY DEAR FRITZ,

In a sleepless hour after midnight I write these lines for the good Dueringer to take to you. . . .

Only on my arrival here did I realize how completely the Old Prussian System has broken down. I could have recoiled in horror when I saw that there was no military force to back my policy, that we had already gone bankrupt on the battlefield. I did not do so because all the responsible people pointed to me as the only man who could still with decency carry out the Great Liquidation. . . . I believed that I had been summoned at five minutes to twelve, and find out that it is already five minutes past.

We are already in the middle of a revolution. If I succeed in carrying it through peacefully, our continued existence as a state after the conclusion of peace is assured. If I do not succeed, the revolution of force and ruin is at hand. I still hope

to save the Kaiser and the Hohenzollern dynasty; this alone demands an expenditure of mind and spirit which absorbs the whole energies of a single man. The Conservatives [1] speak quite openly of his abdication. Thank God, I have in the Social Democrats allies on whose loyalty towards me at least I can entirely rely. With their help I hope to save the Kaiser. Such is the irony of fate.

Wedged in between merciless enemies on the West and the Bolshevik Plague on the East, our last hope of salvation may lie in Wilson's desire to play a big part in the world, and his theory for promoting world-happiness. But any day can bring catastrophe at the front. Thus we are compelled to accept the hard conditions which Wilson makes, or see the last remnants of our manhood's flower and all our hopes for the future bleed uselessly to death on the battlefield. To-day Germany will no longer fight for her Kaiser nor for Alsace-Lorraine, if by sacrificing both she can have peace.

In Baden there is only one thing left, for the Crown to base itself firmly on the people's will. Our good institutions have answered well up to now. But in the great collapse which is now under way and racing forward . . . even in Baden the Crown will suffer a severe ordeal. The old belief in authority is past and gone. Not without reason have I twice asked you to offer your help to the Kaiser as a German Federal Prince.[2] Whoever saved Germany—that I had long ago recognized—would hold the future in his hands. For this reason I at last decided to sacrifice myself, as the only German prince who was still in a position to do this, since Rupprecht of Bavaria, the only other who saw the danger clearly, was tied down by his military command. And now my sacrifice will be branded with the words "Too late!"—since the backbone of our army is already broken. Perhaps I may be able to secure us a peace which still leaves us life and hope for the future; but that is to-day the utmost which any man can accomplish. I do not by any means regret my sacrifice, even if it should mean my own ruin. One of us had to make it for the sake of the Empire,

[1] My words naturally refer not to the official utterances of the Conservative party, but to opinions which were freely voiced about that time in numberless conversations. Cf. Payer's remarks in the secret session of the 31st October. (*Vide infra*, p. 251 f.)

[2] I had begged the Grand Duke to use his influence as Federal Prince to prevent the Military Offensive being made without first attempting a Political Offensive. In going to print I hear that the German Crown Prince had approached the Supreme Command with a similar proposal.

of the Kaiser and of the Monarchy. I have courage and vision enough to accomplish in my present position what I was not allowed to accomplish on the battlefield. This is the task for which Providence has been keeping me. . . .

But my present spiritual condition and tension of soul carries me far above such things, and my individual self, with all the love and happiness which hangs upon it, is totally submerged. I see but one goal before me—the salvation of Germany, and have but one faith, the faith which carries me onward to this goal. Even if the collapse comes, I shall remain true to this faith. I am surrounded by a group of able men, who live in the same faith—the truest of the true, even where they are only acquaintances of yesterday. On them I rely for support and advice. We are sworn together in the same cause. It is true that the Germany which is being born, will look very different from the pre-war Germany. . . .

I write this because I was afraid that all you at home had not grasped the nature of my task. You too have been deceived, with all the rest of the German people. I knew long ago how it would be. But my warnings were fruitless, because the atmosphere necessary for realizing the terrible truth had not been prepared. May the good seed which has been sown in the land of Baden live and thrive through the fiercest storms. But there, too, there are difficult days ahead and we must not be blind to the fact.

To-morrow I approach the most painful Stations of the Way of the Cross on which I have set my foot. It is with a feeling of boundless affection that I remember you and my beloved homeland, and when I am in need of strength in my darkest hours I think of you, who are daily threatened with an American invasion of Alsace.

. . . . But however things turn out, I stand and fall a true son of Baden, and feel myself truly at one with her and her countryside blessed of God.'

On 16th October at 5.20 a.m. President Wilson's Second Note arrived.

'THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
14th October, 1918.

SIR,

In reply to the communication of the German Government dated the 12th instant which you handed me to-day, I have the honour to request you to transmit the following answer :

The unqualified acceptance by the present German Government and by a large majority of the German Reichstag of the terms laid down by the President of the United States of America in his address to the Congress of the United States on 8th January, 1918, and in his subsequent addresses justifies the President in making a frank and direct statement of his decision with regard to the communications of the German Government of 5th and 12th October, 1918.

It must be clearly understood that the process of evacuation and the conditions of an armistice are matters which must be left to the judgment and advice of the military advisers of the Government of the United States and the Allied Governments, and the President feels it his duty to say that no arrangement can be accepted by the Government of the United States which does not provide absolutely satisfactory safeguards and guarantees of the maintenance of the present military supremacy of the armies of the United States and of the Allies in the field. He feels confident that he can safely assume that this will also be the judgment and decision of the Allied Governments.

The President feels that it is also his duty to add that neither the Government of the United States nor, he is quite sure, the Governments with which the Government of the United States is associated as a belligerent will consent to consider an armistice so long as the armed forces of Germany continue the illegal and inhuman practices which they still persist in. At the very time that the German Government approaches the Government of the United States with proposals of peace its submarines are engaged in sinking passenger ships at sea,—and not the ships alone, but the very boats in which their passengers and crews seek to make their way to safety ; and in their present enforced withdrawal from Flanders and France the German armies are pursuing a course of wanton destruction which has always been regarded as in direct violation of the rules and practices of civilized warfare. Cities and villages, if not destroyed, are being stripped not only of all they contain, but often of their very inhabitants. The nations associated against Germany cannot be expected to agree to a cessation of arms while acts of inhumanity, spoliation and desolation are being continued which they justly look upon with horror and with burning hearts.

It is necessary also, in order that there may be no possibility of misunderstanding, that the President should very solemnly call the attention of the Government of Germany to the

language and plain intent of one of the terms of peace which the German Government has now accepted. It is contained in the address of the President delivered at Mount Vernon on 4th July last. It is as follows : ' The destruction of every arbitrary power anywhere that can separately, secretly and of its single choice disturb the peace of the world ; or, if it cannot be presently destroyed, at the least its reduction to virtual impotency.' The power which has hitherto controlled the German nation is of the sort here described. It is within the choice of the German nation to alter it. The President's words just quoted naturally constitute a condition precedent to peace, if peace is to come by the action of the German people themselves. The President feels bound to say that the whole process of peace will, in his judgment, depend upon the definiteness and satisfactory character of the guarantees which can be given in this fundamental matter. It is indispensable that the Governments associated against Germany should know beyond a peradventure with whom they are dealing.

The President will make a separate reply to the Royal and Imperial Government of Austria-Hungary.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my high consideration.

ROBERT LANSING.

Not a word in this terrible document recalled the high office of Arbitrator to which the President had aspired even after the entry of America into the war. First the bow to the Allied generals ; then the abuse of our army and our navy ; the demand for the termination of the intensified submarine war ; and finally in dark and equivocal words the appeal to the German people to take its fate into its own hands, and thus to fulfil the preliminary condition required for the conclusion of peace.

Wilson's note altered the situation in Germany fundamentally. The internal peace which had been newly cemented went to pieces. With our offer longing for peace became the ruling passion of the masses. Many had only dammed up their impatience into a momentary self-control. Only the supposed nearness of peace had kept them back from unpatriotic words and deeds. And now disappointment worked like the bursting of a dam.

The Independents had their way clear. On 16th October the factories of Berlin spoke of a Haase-Ledebour Government as of a coming event. It is true that the *Vorwaerts* warned the workmen : ' We are having nothing to do with any silly tricks, such as erecting the Socialist State by Proclamation—which would be like repairing a watch with hammer and saw. This is how a Government of the Independents would have to set to work. Anyone who has the courage to undertake this task may come forward.'

All this sounded a note of confidence, but in reality the Majority Socialists had a false idea of their own power, which even then was already waning. The Independents continually won fresh ground by working against the idea of a fresh national uprising. Basing themselves upon the report which the Supreme Command had made to the party leaders on 2nd October [1] and on all sorts of false rumours about utterances of Hindenburg's, they proclaimed over the length and breadth of Germany that National Defence was hopeless.

From Switzerland came the still more perilous cry : ' National Defence is unnecessary ! ' The pacifists who lived in Switzerland had become a power in the land, since the day when we called in Wilson to help, thus in the eyes of the world recognizing the illusions they cherished as reality. Their ideas coloured the reports of the Diplomats at Berne. Private letters streamed into Germany imploring us to conciliate Wilson and to build on him alone and no longer on our own military strength. The poet Fritz von Unruh sent me from Zurich a memorandum, the essential demand of which was that we should surrender at discretion ; he looked on it as a sin and a relapse that we still should dream of a National Uprising.

The public organ of the disciples of Wilson was now the *Nationalzeitung* of Basle, in which the Austrian Bauer showed a perilous skill in manipulating the German language to plead Wilson's cause before Germany—for all the world as if he had been in Wilson's employment. He was never tired of working out the theme ' Trust Wilson ' with ever new

[1] Bussche's report, *vide supra*, p. 11.

variations, now pleading, now threatening. Even before the request for the armistice on 1st October he had been advising Germany to leave the fate of the world in Wilson's hands rather than in Ludendorff's, quoting the high words of the President: 'No distinction must be made between those whom we want and those whom we do not want to treat justly.' After Wilson's first note, he was ready to guarantee the material and moral ability of the President to enforce his own gospel, if only the Central Powers, in confidence in Wilson's integrity, would put their fate in his hands without prevarication. His honour and the honour of the United States were pledged; he could not and would not play false with the confidence of the German people. At this moment, when the annihilating note of 14th October appeared, he put the blame entirely upon us; why had the Kaiser and the Crown Prince not understood the President's hint, why does not public opinion in Germany carry his principal demand into execution? The more completely the Central Powers are prepared to do penance, the more will Wilson be enabled to play the Moral Dictator; otherwise the power of Marshal Foch would go on growing from day to day.

Ideas such as these found in Germany a soil which had been well prepared. Our people is not for that reason to be despised. When at the end of September General Ludendorff heard that pulmonary plague had broken out at Marseilles, he clutched at this piece of news in his necessity—he says so himself [1]—like a drowning man at a straw. Can then the hungry and exhausted masses be blamed for clutching in their destitution at Wilson's message? He had spoken like an inspired prophet and had, in fact, pledged his honour and his people's honour for a just peace. One could not, in common decency, bring oneself to impute to Wilson such a breach of public faith. But above all it was the Supreme Command itself which had declared the situation desperate and beyond its power to master, and had referred the German people to Wilson as its saviour.

[1] Cf. Schwertfeger: *Die politischen und militaerischen Verantwortlichkeiten im Verlauf der Offensive von* 1918 (The Work of the Committee of Inquiry), Vol. II., Berlin, 1925, p. 249.

The misery in the towns about the middle of October was indescribable. No coal, no adequate clothing, a ceaseless hunger. The influenza epidemic was striding over Europe. In Berlin alone on 15th October its victims numbered 1722. The disease made terrible ravages among our people, who had no powers of resistance left.

The Presidents of the Provinces wrote the most serious reports with regard to the state of feeling in the industrial centres. Again and again one heard the complaint that the spirit of free self-sacrifice was dying.

There was no lack of counter-movements. They were not made from above, but broke out of a primitive instinct of patriotism, and were strongest in the threatened Eastern provinces. From all directions telegrams and letters reached the Chancellery, imploring me to break off the armistice action, to have the alarm bells rung and the nation summoned to the decisive struggle ; but they were always signed by men of the educated classes—headmasters, officials, University men of all sorts.

The Conservative Party came out of its retirement and declared in the *Kreuzzeitung* that the armistice action had failed ; it sent out on its own responsibility a summons to the defence of the nation.[1] This contained the following :

> ' The conditions made by the President, taken in conjunction with his behaviour in general, only permit of the following interpretation : He is determined to screw his demands up to a complete capitulation, including the handing over of our submarines and of our land armaments and the annihilation of the Emperor's power, in order then to compel us to accept a peace of complete subjection, entailing the cession of Alsace-Lorraine and of parts of the Eastern provinces, and the undertaking of a crushing war indemnity.
>
> Our people must realize what is at stake. If once the enemy troops with their negro hordes trample our country under foot, the fields of the homeland will be laid waste and its people given up to abject misery. If we have to conclude peace defenceless and with our hands bound, we and our children and children's children will have to experience a slavery which will

[1] Printed in Westarp, *op. cit.* p. 101.

far surpass everything which Prussia after 1806 had to suffer from the Corsican conqueror. For generations every German citizen and farmer, every property owner and employer, above all every employee and workman in town and country will become a wage-slave of our enemy. In the German lands freedom will be no more.'

Count Westarp supported this manifesto by a letter addressed to me on 16th October ; [1] he urged the rejection of Wilson's new demand, and proposed among other things that we should answer :

' Whatever the difference of opinion in Germany itself may be with regard to the constitution of the German Empire, the demand that the power of the German Emperor must either be destroyed or reduced practically to impotence, is an interference incompatible with Germany's honour, the more so as the President professes to desire even for the smallest nations their right to self-determination.'

A former Minister of great distinction advised us to give Wilson a dressing down :

' Now that an agreement of principle has been reached with regard to the peace conditions, on the basis of the programme announced by Mr. Wilson himself, the continuation of the slaughter has lost all justification and become mad and criminal. The German Government, desiring to keep its hands clear of this crime, is anxious to hear whether the United States and their Allies are or are not ready, on the basis of the agreement which has been reached with regard to peace conditions and of the further undertakings and explanations which have been given by the German Government, to initiate armistice negotiations without delay. It requires an immediate and definite answer to this question, in order to make its dispositions accordingly.'

Admiral von Tirpitz [2] asked for directions as to the attitude the hundreds of thousands of members of the ' Fatherland party ' were to take up. He declared that the abandonment of the submarine war, demanded by Wilson, would make all further resistance impossible. The fundamental mistake of

[1] The same, p. 100.

[2] This letter of 17th October, 1918, is printed in Tirpitz, *Deutsche Ohnmachtspolitik*, p. 616 f.

our armistice offer he regarded as proved, viz., that the Entente would not do us the favour of granting us an immediate armistice under any conditions that would allow us to put our army and our frontier in a state of defence in case of a breakdown of peace negotiations.

Tirpitz saw only one way out :

> ' A call to the whole people to begin a resolute defence of our honour and our means of livelihood, accompanied by immediate action such as will not leave a trace of doubt, either abroad or at home, as to our National Will.'

The strongest impression of all was left by a letter of 16th October from Count Arnim-Boitzenburg, President of the Prussian House of Lords. He implored me to issue a call to make a last stand ; and at the same time had a keen eye for the morale of the people. He went so far as to say that a proclamation of national defence would do more harm than good, *if put forth by single persons or by single parties ;* it would have to be signed by Government, High Command and Reichstag. The demands that Wilson made must be brought before the people, not in the veiled language of his note, but clearly and vividly.

> ' But even now a united uprising of our people has a chance of success ; apart from the fact that in my opinion the spirit of the front troops, and not only theirs, would be strengthened, such a resolution to resist to the uttermost could not fail to influence the peace party in the enemy countries where it is strong. It would be realized that Wilson had overshot the mark, and such a feeling could only be of advantage to us.'

Count Arnim concluded with the solemn words :

> ' Even where questions of persons are concerned, the interest of the whole must be paramount. If here, too, a change appears to be necessary, it must be made. Where there is a will, there is a way.
>
> If that way does not at last lead to our goal, history cannot reproach us with not having staked our all on our existence and our honour. ' God With Us ' must be the watchword at this hour. But God demands that we, too, should do everything that lies in our power. He has led us into the valley of the

shadow, perhaps, to awaken our people once again and make it capable of the keenest exertion—exertion of the whole of its high moral powers—of finding the way which will lead it, spite of treachery and deceit, to the salvation of mankind.

May Your Grand-Ducal Highness act, and your country will for ever be grateful to you.'

Ludendorff was to arrive on the morning of 17th October to make a military report to the War Cabinet. Till then, no decisions could be taken. There were conflicting reports as to the General's attitude to the restriction of the submarine war. I had had a telegram from Baron Lersner, the representative of the Foreign Office at General Headquarters.[1] His impression was that it was possible to obtain an immediate calling-off of the whole submarine war, if the Government considered this desirable from a political point of view. He added the sinister words: Various individuals at Headquarters recommend that the German Commander-in-Chief should at once put himself in touch with the enemy Commanders-in-Chief.

Lersner warned us against any such procedure, saying that in the present state of opinion in the enemy armies we should get a rude rebuff. He urgently advised them to stick to the policy of dealing with Wilson.

On the other hand there were signs that General Ludendorff was preparing to break off negotiations. He sent on to us the following question in advance of his arrival: [2]

'Will the German people, not only the educated classes, but the broad masses—fight on to the end, if it is made to realize that our military situation will thus be sufficiently improved to prevent any forcing of the frontiers by the enemy? Or are the moral forces of resistance so exhausted that it is impossible to assert this positively? And here it is a question of free will and not of compulsion'

To this question there was unfortunately only one answer: The German people is not yet prepared for such a last fight.

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 52.

[2] Meeting of the Secretaries of State on 16th October, *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 54.

General Ludendorff was right in emphasizing Free Will as the decisive factor ; compulsion would never bring a people dead tired to put out its last ounce of strength. For the decisive struggle a war-cry must be found which would let loose all the nation's primitive instincts of self-maintenance. ' Rather the last desperate struggle than give up the submarine war '—*this* was not the sort of Reveille we needed, even if all the church bells in Germany thundered accompaniment. To-day the people actually underestimated the value of the submarine war after the feeling of bitter disappointment at the navy not having carried out its definite undertakings. Nor would the passions of the people be roused by the claim to interfere in our internal affairs. When we called Wilson to our aid, we knew already that the destruction of Prussian Militarism was part of his programme and it was not only his own fanaticism, but his own prestige and his people's, which committed him to this war aim. Our request for armistice had been a deadly blow to the sense of honour of many millions of Germans. But if the German people were put before conditions calculated not only to dishonour us, but also to deliver us helpless into the hands of our enemies—conditions not merely threatened in equivocal language, nor analyzed and interpreted out of Wilson's notes by the Government, but a terrible reality, the irrevocably-fixed price for the only armistice which the enemy would grant us—conditions such as the handing over of our fleet, of our fortresses, of Alsace-Lorraine—then, and only then could I act as Count Arnim-Boitzenburg demanded of me ; in that case I was convinced I should find Germany ready.

The Cabinet assembled on 16th October to discuss the situation arising out of the President's note. Solf was a broken man. He felt that the most terrible thing about the note was its general tone. These were not the words of a man who sought to realize a peace of justice, but of the head of a coalition determined on annihilating us.

Haussmann reported upon the state of public opinion. Wilson's note had had the effect of a bombshell ; only now Wilson had begun to speak in the tone of one who demanded

Germany's military capitulation, did the people realize the whole seriousness of the situation. His brusque treatment of the " Kaiser question " was alarming. Berlin was discussing the Abdication.

He continued : The question whether Wilson demanded the Abdication of the Kaiser or merely a Constitutional Monarchy would have to be thoroughly investigated. In this connection the Monarch would have to consider whether he would himself undertake the reconstruction which had already been begun or would leave it to his son or his grandson. The Chancellor would have to discuss with the Monarch this question too. He, Haussmann, thought it would be sufficient to introduce a strictly constitutional monarchy, while leaving its present occupant on the throne.

Scheidemann at once contradicted this opinion of his that Wilson's words aimed at securing the Kaiser's abdication. Wilson had no interest in removing the Kaiser and desired merely to put him on the same footing as the Kings of Italy and Belgium, or as the Kings of the Scandinavian countries.

I, too, at the time had the impression that the words ' destruction of every arbitrary power ' had been carefully chosen and were merely intended to urge Germany forward on the path of constitutional reform.

We all felt it would be senseless to undertake improvements in our constitution at this moment. The Flanders front was breaking and we were negotiating upon Art. 11 (consent of the Reichstag to a declaration of war). Germany's own needs were satisfied through the formation of a Government based upon the Majority of the Reichstag.

Groeber regarded the revised draft of Art. 11 as a sufficient answer to Wilson's demand for the elimination of the ' power that threatens world peace,' but protested against the imputation that we in Germany had up to then been living under an arbitrary despotism. The Kaiser could never have carried on war without war credits.

This was disputed by Scheidemann, but chiefly from

tactical considerations—with an anxious glance at the Independents; they would have scored off the Social Democratic party, which had voted the war credits, had the remark been allowed to pass. But it was he who voiced the general feeling most vividly in his remark: 'I personally feel it shameful that we should have now to introduce all our liberal reforms under the pressure of the enemy.'

Thus in one point we were unanimous: how Wilson's interference in our internal affairs was to be interpreted and properly answered. Further, I think, we were all clear that we could not now break off the armistice action once begun, simply for the sake of maintaining the intensified submarine war.

The representative of the Supreme Command in Berlin reassured us about the new situation on the Flanders front; even if the present position should prove untenable, we need not fear a military catastrophe. A definite programme for leading the troops back in the course of three nights to a new and strong position, with its flank resting on the Scheldt, had been worked out. The holding of the Flemish coast was a mere question of prestige, now that submarine base and dockyards had been transferred elsewhere.

How much rope had we in our dealings with Wilson? That was the question on which everything depended. Before we could answer it we naturally had to await the discussions of the 17th; but already the general opinion was that were the threatened demand for a capitulation to be actually presented, the war would have to go on.

Haussmann voiced the general feeling: 'As the representative of the High Command here present must recognize, there is nothing dearer to us than the honour of the army. Its maintenance is a supreme interest of State,' [1]

At the end of the meeting a lively desire was expressed to hear the views of others besides General Ludendorff upon the military situation. I had already made recommendations to the Kaiser in this sense, and received the answer in the

[1] Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 255 f.

course of the day. The Kaiser decided that, besides General Ludendorff, other generals, too, were to be heard.

Together with my military advisers I prepared for the discussions of the following day :

I would inquire whether the Western front could by any reinforcement be made to hold ; whether such reinforcement could be in time, and where it could come from—from at home, or from Russia ; whether the evacuation of the East was admissible from a military and from an economic point of view. We must further be informed when the year's campaign might be expected to end, or at least when the mass attacks might be expected to cease. And finally we ought to look the situation in the face, as it would be when we are fighting alone, that is to say when Austria and Turkey have deserted us, Rumania is against us, a new Southern front has been formed, and we have no more oil.

Early on 17th October General Ludendorff came to me and gave me a description of the present situation on the Western front, very similar to that of Colonel von Haeften's. In spite of the breakdown of the front in Flanders and of the imminent fall of Lille, he had no fear of a military collapse, but thought he would be able to carry out the retreat in good order. I told him of the Kaiser's decision. He fired up ; that was for him a vote of No Confidence. I disputed that, and said that it was not merely the Kaiser who demanded the hearing of other generals, but that that was the universal wish of the people and in fact was only natural, considering our position. The General stuck to his opinion and threatened the immediate resignation of himself and of the Field-Marshal. I therefore got the War Cabinet together [1] before the big meeting at which Ludendorff was to speak, informed them of this refusal of the General's, and put the question whether we could make ourselves responsible for the dismissal of the two Army chiefs.

They were all indignant at the idea that in such a situation we should be asked to stake Germany's fate upon a single

[1] Meeting of the Inner Cabinet of 17th October, *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 55.

pair of eyes. One Minister reminded us that it had been a War Council which had decided upon Falkenhayn's dismissal and Hindenburg's appointment. Solf related how he had that very morning been visited at an unusually early hour by the deputy Riesser, who came to tell him that the confidence of the National Liberals in General Ludendorff had been so shaken that they hoped the Government would not be guided in its present decisions by Ludendorff and Hindenburg alone. But none of my colleagues advised provoking the dismissal of the Supreme Army Commanders. The Government would then be exposed to the reproach that in a military situation of such gravity it had deprived Germany of her two first generals. Count Roedern suggested that the Kaiser might conceivably induce the Field-Marshal to sacrifice his inclinations and to remain even without General Ludendorff. At last Payer won general assent for the formula, that should Ludendorff report that we were not obliged to accept any conditions whatever, no further importance need be attached to the hearing of the other commanders. If, on the contrary, Ludendorff should declare that he could not hold the front any longer, it would be necessary to hear the other generals too.

I was in a position to inform them that the High Command did not regard the situation as desperate.

At the great meeting of 17th October, General Ludendorff had again brought with him Colonel Heye, the head of the Operations Department of the Staff, the Minister of Marine was accompanied by Admiral Scheer. As expert for Eastern military problems we had invited General Hoffmann, a former intimate associate in Tannenberg days, but estranged from him since Brest Litovsk. General Hoffmann had friends and enemies in the German army, but his military genius and energy were undisputed. I have heard a remark of one of our most tried leaders, who by no means counted as a friend of General Hoffmann : ' General Ludendorff would have been well advised to take with him to the West the man who had helped to think out and execute his great deeds in the East.'

I reproduce the memorable meeting of 17th October from the text of the shorthand minutes which Dr. Simons himself took.[1]

[1] These minutes show variations from the form given in *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 57, and also go further.

CHAPTER V

MEETING OF THE WAR CABINET ON 17TH OCTOBER 1918

PRESENT: The Imperial Chancellor; the Vice-Chancellor; the Minister of War; the Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs; for the Treasury; for Food; for the Admiralty; the Chief of the Admiralty Staff; the Vice-President of the Prussian Council of Ministers; the Secretaries of State Groeber, Haussmann, Scheidemann; the Under-Secretaries Goeppert, von Stumm and Wahnschaffe; the Permanent Secretary Deutelmoser; General Ludendorff; General Hoffmann; Colonel Heye.

THE CHANCELLOR: The situation in which we find ourselves is the consequence of the step which we took on 5th October. It was at the urgent request of the Supreme Command that we then addressed to President Wilson the peace note and the request for armistice. Then came a counter-question which we answered. We have now before us a new note which aggravates Wilson's demands, and with regard to which we have now to make up our minds. Wilson has obviously been put in a difficult position by the American jingoes and by pressure from France and England, and, as I hope, he would himself be glad if we would give him the possibility of negotiating with us further and overcoming the resistance of the warmongers.

This is how I view the position. Now, before we reply to Wilson's note we have to determine what Germany's military situation demands. For this purpose we have asked Your Excellency (General Ludendorff) to come here and give us information. We have formulated and laid before Your Excellency a number of questions, upon which we expect information. Your Excellency has in turn put other questions to us, which we shall answer in the course of the meeting.

The first question is whether through transfers of divisions from the East, the Western front can be so strengthened that we can count on being able to hold out for a considerable time.

The second question is whether better supplies of human material from at home could enable the army to hold out longer.

General Ludendorff : This is not the first time that I have had a number of questions put to me, which it is quite inpossible to answer precisely. War is not an arithmetical problem. In war there is always a number of probabilities and improbabilities. What will ultimately happen no one has any idea. When in 1914 we came to East Prussia and the orders for the battle of Tannenberg were issued, with the help of my loyal colleague Hoffmann, we did not know then either what would happen—whether Rennenkampf would march or not. He did not march, and the battle was won. In war you need the Soldier's Luck ; perhaps Germany will still enjoy Soldier's Luck once more.

I can only tell you my convictions. I bear the responsibility for what I say, and have borne it four long hard years.

If I am asked whether the divisions from the East would alter the position, I can only ask in reply what there is to be had from the East. I have discussed the matter with Hoffmann. We have freed three divisions through the evacuation of White Russia ; but this evacuation is a slow process. We have still big stores of oats in the district. Next year we shall particularly feel the want of oats ; that must be borne in mind.

Three divisions then are coming. Three divisions cannot change the situation ; but the soldier must scrape together everything he can. We could not do that before because we had to protect the rest of our frontier against the Bolsheviks, until we got the money. How many troops have we got in the East then ?

Colonel Heye : Still twenty-four divisions. Still seven in the North-East.

General Hoffmann : There are seven in the North-East, five in the Ukraine and twelve in Rumania.

General Ludendorff: Then comes the question, can we give up the Ukraine, or not? The High Command went into the Ukraine in full agreement with the Imperial Government, because we needed the land to supplement our supplies, and because we had to break up the enemy's Eastern Front. If we can give up the Ukraine supplies and if we can take the risk of the Ukraine becoming Bolshevist, then we can fetch away these divisions too.

From an economic point of view, I think the Ukraine is absolutely necessary for us—from a military point of view, too. We could not carry on the war in the West without the horses from the Ukraine; whether our own agriculture can produce the equivalent, I do not know. I should then have to ask for a different set of instructions for dealing with the Eastern questions from the one which was given me in March.

The Chancellor: Would the transfer of the Eastern divisions enable the Western front to hold out?

General Ludendorff: That would be the case to some extent at least. The question is whether this advantage is not outweighed by the resulting economic and political disadvantages and by the danger at home.

The Chancellor: Would the new troops give our Western armies such a power of offensive as to bring the enemy to the conference table?

General Ludendorff: No, these troops have no power of offensive left. We have already picked out all the good that was in them. They have no more power of offensive, but still a certain power of resistance. You must not underestimate the fact that the Eastern troops have no longer the spirit of the Western. Perhaps General Hoffmann will say something on this point.

The Chancellor: First another question. I take it then, that the transfer of the troops from the East would only postpone the moment which we thought had come at the beginning of October, and that then the situation which compelled us to make the peace step, would recur?

General Ludendorff: It depends on what the country can still furnish us with. It is a question of Man-Power.

THE CHANCELLOR : I call on General Hoffmann.

GENERAL HOFFMANN : The divisions in the East consist of men between 35 and 45 years. The vastness of the territory which they occupy, and the temptations which they are subject to, and which they often succumb to—whether through the bribes of the Eastern Jewish trader or through the Bolshevist propaganda—have seriously damaged the quality of these troops. Even before the transfer of the last formations we had in Lithuania only about one soldier to every eight square miles. For months the troops have been scattered about in outlying posts, without much control, and the Bolshevist ideas, in combination with the bribes, have very much got the upper hand.

We can only spare ten divisions, because we need two divisions and the cavalry to guard our Ukraine frontier.

I must repeat that these divisions are no longer fit to be used for an offensive. They still possess powers of defence. They fulfil their task in the East excellently. I would even undertake to attack with them once more in the East. But they are no longer fit to be used against all the resources of the enemy in the West.

THE CHANCELLOR : You then regard such a transfer as in itself possible ?

GENERAL HOFFMANN : If we want to transfer them, it is high time we did it. I need three months to get the troops out of the Ukraine. One can only run two or three trains a day there, and the want of lubricants will stop many of these. Then, too, we must reckon with sabotage, even with a flare-up of revolution, if the railways are to be staffed by Ukrainians. Even now a concentration of the troops on the light railway would take three days, and a concentration on the normal gauge railway six days—that is leaving all material behind, and in particular the already harvested crops. But these times are so calculated that we could take no supplies whatever and these would be simply lost. The Officer Commanding at Minsk tells me that to transport the harvest he needs 500 trains ; which we, of course, have not got. The troops would then have to march.

General Ludendorff: Up to now about a million men have been fed by these Eastern territories, and these would now become a burden on the home country. The cattle imports from the Ukraine have meant a considerable saving of home cattle stocks. You know how serious the cattle situation in Germany is. To give up the Eastern cattle stocks would, in the opinion of the Quartermaster-General, bring the country into the greatest difficulties. I have asked the Government, too, to ascertain whether this is the case. It is just the cattle question which we of the High Command regard as decisive. We have drawn 140,000 horses from the Ukraine alone.

The Chancellor: What is the state of the Bolshevik army; is it being reinforced, can it threaten us?

General Hoffmann: No, from a purely military point of view it will not be able to do us any damage for a long time to come; we have nothing to fear on that score; but there is the moral danger.

General Ludendorff: And that danger is great. The cordon is so weak that we are not in a position to protect the home country.

The Chancellor: In short then, the Western front will receive through Eastern reinforcements no new powers of offensive; but the twelve divisions which are at our disposal would be valuable in defence. To bring them up would take three months. Then we should lose the supplies of oats, and also a large number of men, who up to now have lived on those territories, will have to be fed here. Your Excellency now puts the counter-question as to the food value which the Ukraine has for Germany in the view of the Government.

General Ludendorff: Yes. We have already bought up a million and a half tons of corn there which are already beginning to [rot].

The Chancellor: Gentlemen, I open this question to debate.

Count Roedern: The Secretaries of State for Economics and for Food are not present. Their opinions differ upon

this point. The Food Ministry wants still to have the use of the Ukraine, the Ministry of Economics is very sceptical as to its value. In so far as I can judge the situation from the exchange of memoranda before me, the view of the Minister of Economics seems the better founded. In any case the supplies which have reached the civil population from the Ukraine have been quite inconsiderable ; the value of what it has done for the army—which will now have to be made good from within the country, is much higher. Has the army drawn upon the Ukraine for cattle, too ?

General Ludendorff : The distinction between army and civil population is untenable. It all goes into one pot, and it is a question of no importance whether the Ukraine cattle is used for the army or the civil population. We must have the cattle, and I am not going to have to worry myself as to where they are to come from. Apart from that there is the question of military raw material. We are now losing the copper mines at Bor to the Serbians ; if we are to evacuate Belgium, too, the economic situation will be so serious that we shall not know how to carry on. A simultaneous retreat in East and West would thus mean collapse.

Solf : The representative of the Foreign Office in the Ukraine reported to me yesterday upon the conditions there. To judge from the economic part of his report, I consider that the value of the Ukraine for the supply of the army is enormous, and in this question we can make no distinction as to who is the *immediate* consumer of these supplies. The economic value of the country is in any case very great.

I then asked Herr von Mumm what would happen in the Ukraine if we withdrew the German troops. He was quite certain that the Bolsheviks would then begin a wild reign of terror. The rich would all have their heads cut off.

General Ludendorff : We would have to put up with that, even if it means a breach of faith on our part, should Germany's salvation demand it. Is the evacuation necessary for Germany or not ? If it is, it must be made, in spite of all the gruesome consequences.

Count Roedern : The question can only be answered

from the harvest estimates which have been made up to date. For this we need the presence of the Food Minister.

SCHEIDEMANN : If we put all these questions of Food and Bolshevism aside for a moment, there remains always the question whether the Western front will still hold out three months, or whether the break-through will come before that.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : I have already told the Chancellor that in my view a break-through is possible but not probable. I do not regard a break-through as in itself probable. The only answer I can conscientiously give is that I have no fear of one coming.

THE CHANCELLOR : I go on to the second question—whether the country is ready to provide the Supreme Command with the necessary Human Material ?

But we must first of all consider whether it is technically possible to raise this necessary material.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : I am not in a position to judge of that point. Since 1916 I have made the most valiant efforts ; hardly a month has passed without my pressing the point. It has been asked whether the reinforcements will come in time ; reinforcements always come in time. In war you can never tell how long an action will last. How often have I sent reserves when everyone said they would arrive too late, and they arrived in time all the same. You must simply send them and leave the rest to fate.

THE CHANCELLOR : I call on the War Minister.

SCHEÜCH (War Minister) : There are two possible measures to be considered, a general normal reinforcement or a strong non-recurring reinforcement which would prejudice normal reserves. In the first alternative, the normal monthly draft for the reinforcement of the front amounts to 190,000 men, according to the newest calculations for Prussia and the other Federal States taken together. This number can be supplied without any serious dislocation of the industrial system at home. I assume that to give the detailed figures is unnecessary at this point.

Should we decide on a single strong reinforcement, I calculate that this would amount to 600,000 men. And

here I am not overestimating ; the separate figures, in fact, make up 637,000. In this case the dislocation would be felt. I do not believe that the production of war material would be considerably lessened, but there would be a disturbing effect on industry. The case of each individual would be gone through in subordinate committees and then, too, the contingent of the untrained would also be taken into the account—for instance, the remainder of the 1900 class, 50,000 of whom still remain in industry. The others have been already trained, partly at the bases, a third of them at home. It is true these are the last men there are, and the others have still to be trained.

Now we have to consider the following : If we take the 600,000 for the front, further reinforcements will still be necessary. In that case we can no longer count on 190,000 a month, but only about 100,000 men a month for the next half year. After that, the further monthly draft till the autumn of 1919 could again be reckoned at 150,000 men, if the 1901 class were to be called up before the time. Next year's reserves would then be exhausted towards the end of September.

General Ludendorff : I am all for the second alternative. Had we had this improvement in numbers just lately, we should have had no crisis on the Western front. And if I get the men, I can face the future with confidence. But I must get the men, and get them soon, if we are to hope once again.

Scheüch (War Minister) : I should like to assure you that I shall devote my whole energies to seeing that this number is kept up. But then we must not put off following out this plan, even for a day.

General Ludendorff : I must ask you, gentlemen, to picture the situation. The day before yesterday was the Battle of Ypres. The English and the French attacked with very strong forces. We knew they would. We wanted to hold out. We saw the danger coming. It was a difficult situation to have to say to oneself : ' We shall be pushed back and must still hold together.' We have been pushed back

but all has turned out well. It is true that holes four kilometres in width were pierced in our front, but the enemy did not break through, and we held the front. Reinforcements from at home would have meant something to us then !

The strain to which the individual soldier is put has reached a limit which must not be exceeded. Officer and men alike have a feeling of isolation. Whenever the officer goes away, the men say to him : ' Where are you going, sir ? ' and then run. If we can stop the holes, we can prevent the break-through. If we can tell the front that men are coming, then it will gain confidence, and we may be confident too.

SCHEÜCH : If I understand His Excellency (Ludendorff) correctly, he means that if we bring up one such big non-recurring reinforcement, it will alter the situation at the front considerably.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : Yes.

SCHEÜCH : Has the fact that the Americans will always receive bigger reinforcements than we been taken into the account ?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : We should not exaggerate the value of the Americans. They are certainly bad enough. But we have beaten them up to now, even where we were in a great numerical inferiority. It is true that the proportion between the numbers keeps altering ; but our men have no fear of the Americans, as they have of the English. It is only necessary to free our troops from this feeling of isolation.

COLONEL HEYE : How long would the second plan with the 600,000 men take to carry out ?

SCHEÜCH : I should not care to give too short a time. We must take men from industry and agriculture faster than we originally intended. The military forces at home can be made available sooner. 75,000 men, for instance, can be drawn from Prussia. Here I have brought pressure to bear ; here is no place for timid measures. Then in addition to these there are perhaps 25,000 from the other states. There are available straight away perhaps 50,000 untrained and 250,000 trained men ; but it will take some weeks before they are all available. I suppose that will suit the Supreme Command.

General Ludendorff : We should naturally prefer them all to come at once. What is so depressing for our army is that the strengths of the units continually get less and less.

Scheüch : The transport conditions at home will cause difficulties too. Recently at one of the main depots, there were 6,000 men ready to be transported to the Western front ; but they could not be sent off, because the rolling stock was lacking. This case may repeat itself.

General Ludendorff : We, too, had a great transport crisis as the result of the evacuation. And it had its effects on the home country, too. But now that has been put right again. I shall only be too thankful if all that is humanly possible in this direction is done.

I now come to another point which does not appear on the questionnaire, viz., the state of feeling in the army. It is of the highest importance. His Excellency, Herr Scheüch, recently mentioned the 41st Division, and an Order which had been given it. I had unfortunately to admit that the Order was correct. The division had totally broken down on 8th August. That was a black day in Germany's history. The same division is now fighting splendidly on the east bank of the Meuse. That is a matter of morale. The morale at that time was bad. The division had had influenza, and had no potatoes. The morale of the drafts which came from home was not good either. The transports arrived in a condition which no longer fulfilled the requirements of discipline and order. There were cases of gross insubordination. I am accustomed to speak to the officers and troops as they arrive. An officer then told me that he had never in his life seen such a draft as he had just fetched from the district of the 13th Division of the 7th Army Corps—he would never have dreamed that he had German soldiers under him, they were more like Russian Bolshevists.

This state of feeling has spread from home to the army, I am well aware that now the reverse is the case, and the state of feeling which the men on leave bring home is pretty bad. I have taken great pains to improve it, but I must

urgently beg you not only to think of the men but also of their morale.

Think of the number of shirkers in Maubeuge, for instance! Our huge army contains some heroes and some very, very weak specimens. We must take account of them too. The country wants freshening up. I make the urgent request to all staffs that they should try to improve morale at home, and make the soldier in Belgium realize that he is defending German soil. From many quarters, for instance from Gallwitz's army, I hear that these armistice negotiations are having very unfortunate results. In Belgium the men are saying: 'Why should we fight on here, when we have got to evacuate anyhow!' And in front of Verdun: 'What is the good of our sacrifices, if the French are going to get Alsace-Lorraine anyhow?' We have no use for men without morale. A Divisional Staff told me recently that they had already sent the men they had got from the Eastern front away again, on the ground that they were of no more use in the West. The spirit of the country must be worked up.

THE CHANCELLOR: Now that His Excellency General Ludendorff has touched upon the question of morale, I think it necessary to call on the three parliamentary ministers to report upon the morale at home and to express their views upon the proposals which have been made.

GROEBER: The state of feeling in the country this last summer was pretty bad. I was personally convinced of that by a journey I made to South Germany. This was especially brought about by men on leave who told all kinds of gruesome stories—many invented, but also many of them true. Such things are felt more keenly the longer the war lasts. In a big army there will naturally often occur cases of violent treatment of the men; but here there is much room for improvement.

Above all there is the feeding of officers and men. In particular the Officers' Clubs—there the officer can provide himself with food and luxuries—if the soldier wants anything, he is told that it is not for him. In normal times this sort of thing can be put up with; but in times like these they cannot

help thinking : what a lot we have to put up with, and what a fine time the officers have. Could not this cause of ill-feeling be removed ?

General Ludendorff : I am absolutely of the opinion that the officer should share the life of the men. I have investigated this complaint and have been satisfied by the G.O.C. Service Corps that there is only one canteen, which sells equally to officers and men. No difference of price is made either. There was one difference ; the small canteens supply themselves from the big canteens, and the bigger deliver to the smaller at cheaper rates, in order that the smaller ones may make a profit. A few of the higher staffs had no canteens for the men, but supplied their wants directly from the big canteen, and at the cheaper price. As soon as I discovered that I ordered it to stop, and ordered that the staffs should draw their supplies from the big canteens at the same prices as from the small ones.

In the trenches, as is well known, officers and men eat from the same field kitchen. It is only natural that the Staff should have its food prepared better ; no one will suggest that we ought to eat out of the field kitchen. But we put through everything that we think right and proper.

The worst is that rumours go about which threaten one's honour and reputation, and one can do nothing to prevent it. Give me details, and then I will take steps, but believe me, conditions are not so bad as is asserted. Generally speaking one may say that all is well.

The Chancellor : I may perhaps ask you not to go into detail, as we have no time for it. What view do the ministers take of Germany's morale in connection with the measures which the War Minister proposes ?

Scheidemann : I am quite prepared to believe that there are still several hundreds of thousands who can be mobilized for the army, but it would be a mistake to suppose that these hundreds of thousands will improve the morale of the army. I am convinced that the contrary is the case. The length of the war, and then too the many disappointments, are wearing the people out. The submarine war, the technical superiority

of the enemy, the desertion or complete bankruptcy of its allies have all been disappointments, and then there is the want at home which daily grows greater. Now comes the reaction of people upon army, and *vice versa*; the men on leave bring with them gruesome stories from the army and bring back to it bad news from home. This exchange is depressing to morale. It would be a self-deception to shut our eyes to this fact. The workmen are more and more inclined to say: Better a horrible end than an endless horror.

General Ludendorff: Could not Your Excellency manage to improve the morale of the masses?

Scheidemann: That is a question of potatoes. We have no more meat. Potatoes cannot be delivered, because we have 4000 trucks a day too few. Fat is absolutely unobtainable. The want is so great, that it is to me just a riddle what North Berlin and what East Berlin live on. Until this riddle is solved, any improvement of the morale is out of the question. It would be fundamentally dishonest for us to leave a shadow of doubt upon this point in anyone's mind.

Haussmann: If we are to suit all our measures to the state of public feeling, we are making ourselves dependent upon a very variable factor. There is no doubt that Parliament will launch the strongest possible appeal to the people and also that it may have a great effect. How long this will last—how many weeks, how many days, depends on the course of events. Only the impudent tone of Wilson's note has brought the people to realize the true seriousness of the situation. This has given rise to a great conflict of public feeling. We should have got them in hand, if once the shameless demands which can be read between the lines of the note could be clearly brought out. Tell us how many days the needs of the army allow us to take for carrying on the negotiations—we will set the tone of them accordingly.

General Ludendorff: If the army lasts out the next four weeks, till winter comes on, we shall be well out of it. If we could manage to improve the morale of the people for these

four weeks, that would be of the highest possible military value. I will do all in my power to improve the home food supplies. I will discuss that with the head of the Railways at once. I cannot judge how far this is possible.

SCHEIDEMANN : The lack of trucks was recently impressed upon us by Herr von Waldow. He then said that we should not much longer get even the small quantity of potatoes that are now being distributed.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : I will take the necessary steps.

VON PAYER (Vice-Chancellor) : I do not think the situation is so black as his Excellency, Herr Scheidemann, paints it. One must make distinctions. I remember the state of feeling in the summer. No one doubted then that we should emerge from the war as victors, but the people was sick of the war, and morale was therefore bad. In spite of that nobody supposed that we could have a collapse.

When we sent off the first note, people asked themselves what was the matter ? Things could not be going so well after all. Public feeling grew uncertain of itself. When Wilson's second note arrived, the morale of the people went to pieces ; they realized that it was now a matter of life and death ; but then came another revulsion : when once he realizes that as a nation we are threatened with annihilation, and in particular economic annihilation, everyone reflects whether we have no choice but to endure this, or whether there is any possibility still of averting it. Suppose we tell the people : ' There is still a possibility of averting it if you only hold out ; but if you cannot hold out a few weeks more, then you must count on an almost total eclipse of Germany and her disappearance from among the nations : you must count on a crushing burden of indemnities—*then* we could get them to hold up their heads again.

If we succeed in so formulating the note that the people gains from it the assurance, that difficult as our situation is we are not throwing down our arms—then all is not yet lost.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : The Vice-Chancellor's speech is very much to my mind. The only question is : How shall

we manage it ? Here I can only repeat the request : Get hold of the people. Work it up. Can't Ebert manage that ? We *must*.

FRIEDBERG (Prussian Vice-President) : In any case we must act extremely quickly. In the last few weeks the situation has been very difficult. We have had the Provincial Presidents assembled here. Then the whole collection of the Berlin Pastors appeared. The parties keep holding party meetings—no one knows what to think, and they are all quite at a loss to imagine how on earth we can suddenly be faced with such a catastrophe. We are invited to tell them to represent the situation as very serious, but not yet desperate. That will not produce a particularly high morale.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : No, not at all.

FRIEDBERG : Now we are informed that the state of affairs is in reality quite different. Here I am of His Excellency Herr von Payer's opinion, that we ought to get out of the note to Wilson all the advantages that we can as quick as we can.

THE CHANCELLOR : Your Excellency is of the opinion that four weeks of good morale are necessary ?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : I should prefer it to be a bit longer. In any case this period will bring the crisis on the Western front to an end, even if we still have to go back after that. I somehow feel convinced of that. The enemy's power of offensive in the last few days was no longer considerable.

THE CHANCELLOR : But within a week or ten days there will be a new wave of attack, so Your Excellency recently told me in our conversation.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : Yes, that is true. A new attack on the 10th Army is already in progress. I do not know how things are going there. To-morrow there will be another against the 5th Army ; there is no end of them.

THE CHANCELLOR : The question now is whether the measures which you recommend will put a stopper on the attacks, so that our work can once more be carried on freely. Your Excellency knows that I was not at the time in favour

of the Peace Note, but I was told every hour costs us so many hundred thousand men and every moment can bring a catastrophe.[1] His Excellency Herr von Hintze is my witness.

VON HINTZE: That is so, Your Highness.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: To-day, too, it is just as much the case that we may any day have a break-through and a defeat. The day before yesterday passed off well; things may turn bad again.

THE CHANCELLOR: You say that we shall be in a better position after four weeks have passed, but the English will say that if it lasts another six weeks more, they will not need to negotiate at all. In any case, the Entente will do all it can to protract our negotiations with Wilson.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: The discussions in Berlin have come to the ears of the Entente, and have brought a tremendous increase of the offensive spirit. But in any case I presume that any military reinforcement of the front will also strengthen Your Highness's hands for the conclusion of peace.

THE CHANCELLOR: That is true.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: I cannot say whether the reinforcement will come in time or not. I can only repeat, any help that may come will be timely.

THE CHANCELLOR: What is the present strength of the Western army?

COLONEL HEYE: On the Western front there are now 191 divisions, including four Austrian divisions and seven from the East. They differ considerably in strength. Twenty-eight of the divisions have battalions of a strength of only about 290 to 300 men. The rest have battalions of about 400 to 500.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: Had we full-strength battalions the situation would be saved.

THE CHANCELLOR: The discussion up to now has dealt with our questions one to eight. I now come to question nine: Will an evacuation of the Eastern territories render the oil supplies for army and civil population so precarious

[1] Hindenburg's statement of 2nd October. *Vide supra*, p. 15.

as to force us to conclude peace prematurely or to give up the submarine war ?

General Ludendorff : That is a matter for the War Minister.

General Scheüch : This point is certainly of the greatest importance. When Rumania is no longer at our disposal, we shall only be able to carry on the war for another month and a half. Up to now we have always counted on two months ; but this calculation has not been verified, owing to decrease in means of transport and increase of consumption.

The Army Command does not know how long the submarine war can be carried on if once the Rumanian oil supplies fail us, because it has no information as to the navy's consumption. The Admiralty figures for motor car consumption reached us only yesterday and have not yet been digested.

It is imperatively necessary that the military and naval oil supplies should be jointly administered. We must consider in common not only how we are to divide the supply, but also how we can eke it out. That is by no means clear. I would ask those concerned to begin negotiations on this point as soon as possible—this very afternoon, if it is anyhow possible. Perhaps the presence of the Supreme Command and of the Admiralty Staff at the negotiations would also be advisable.

As regards home industry too, we are having to face quite a serious situation. We are only covered for a few months more. Yesterday the Ministry of Economics discussed the question as to how we could cut down the home supply of oil for lighting purposes. Any such restriction of supply will naturally be very serious, as there is hardly any possible substitute left. In many cases it would simply mean that the lighting of the works will be cut off.

But here, too, I can only give a clear picture when I have investigated the consumption figures, the stocks, the sources of supply and the possibilities of dilution in the navy.

Admiral Scheer : Up to now the navy has managed its own supplies, with the result that we can carry on the sub-

marine war for eight months more, even without Rumanian stocks.

But I am ready to concede that the supplies ought to be so managed that the army stocks are not exhausted before those of the navy. We must together bring the war to a good end. I am quite prepared to co-operate in preventing one of the two from playing the *beatus possidens*, while the other has nothing left.

RITTER VON MANN: I am entirely of your opinion. Whether and how it is of advantage to put by special stocks of petroleum for the civil population I do not know. Perhaps one could use something like ten per cent. of the stocks for this purpose; but on this point I have no means of judging.

THE CHANCELLOR: I have no idea either as to the proportion of the amounts consumed by army, navy and agriculture.

GOEPPERT (Under-Secretary): I might ask that the civil population should be taken into account, too. The people have been promised 10,000 tons a month, and that is the absolute minimum. That must remain if the population are to be kept more or less quiet through the winter. Last winter when the quantity was 12,000 a month, the lighting arrangements were on their very last legs.

THE CHANCELLOR: How long can army, navy and home front hold out from the moment when the Rumanian oil supplies are cut off? I should be very glad to have the answer to this question in the shortest possible time. When can I have it?

GENERAL SCHEÜCH: The necessary investigations shall be made this afternoon.

THE CHANCELLOR: When I am told that the home front can hold out a few months more, the army a month and a half more, the navy eight months more, I can form no general picture of the situation. These figures must all be brought to a common denominator.

I will take advantage of the opportunity to ask His Excellency Herr Goeppert one more question with regard to the importance of the Ukraine for our supplies. In the

present condition of the Western front, can the further occupation of the Ukraine by twelve German divisions be justified by Germany's economic needs ?

Von Payer (the Vice-Chancellor) : The Food Minister has just arrived.

The Chancellor : I call on the Minister to answer this question.

Von Waldow : If the question is put in this way, I can answer it with a simple negative. In our estimates we have only reckoned upon the food and fodder of the Ukraine as a resource in emergency, and for a general improvement of the situation. If the time has come to begin the last desperate struggle, we can give up the Ukraine, too, and try to increase our stocks through smuggling.

General Ludendorff : I repeat that at present roughly a million men are being fed by the Eastern territories, and that their provisioning will then become a burden on us.

Von Waldow : I should then require to know in advance the amounts of the rations and the quantities which are in question.

General Ludendorff : I will tell the Quartermaster-General to go into the question thoroughly with you. The Ministry of Food has told us again and again that we must hold the Ukraine. We must be perfectly clear on this point. If we do not need to live on the Ukraine, it is only a question of keeping there as many troops as can secure the frontiers against the danger of Bolshevism.

Von Waldow : When I insisted on the necessity of keeping the Ukraine, the situation was totally different.

General Ludendorff : If we give up the Ukraine, our cattle supplies will be crippled. However, this problem is not so pressing. Troops from Austria are being transported to Rumania as well as from the Ukraine. Only the basis of our decisions must in principle be clear.

Goeppert : The Commissioner from Kieff, whom I saw an hour ago, confirms my view that we have no hope of getting any big quantities of grain from the Ukraine this winter. Even the price would prevent that. Already 3000 roubles

are being paid for [. . .] The quantities of the other foodstuffs are not so big either as to make an essential difference in the provisioning of Germany. On the other hand it is generally believed that the withdrawal of the German troops would mean an immediate flare-up of Bolshevism with all its consequences. It would be giving up the crystallization-nucleus around which the Russian ferment could come to stability, the whole of Russia would be given over to Bolshevism, and the relations which we have established with South Russia would be broken off. This point must also be considered.

THE CHANCELLOR: The Foreign Office has taken steps to secure Rumania for us, but it is possible that Rumania will prefer to wait till we are crushed. If need be, is Rumania to be coerced?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: We have discussed that danger with the Foreign Office and discussed their attitude. On 10th October we proposed that an attempt should be made in common with Austria to coerce Rumania. Austria refused. We had in fact troops enough; some being slowly brought up from Hungary, then two divisions of Austrians and one cavalry division from the Ukraine, which had been fetched by General von Arz. The Rumanian army will not begin on its own account, but only if joined by Entente troops in considerable numbers. These troops are now on the way. One detachment is being directed via Nish against Belgrade, another, as it appears, via the mouth of the Maritza against Constantinople. As far as the information which I have received enables me to judge of the situation at all, we have no reason to be anxious for the next week.

THE CHANCELLOR: I call on the Foreign Office to make a statement.

SOLF: I have no information.

COUNT ROEDERN: Can the Danube front be forced?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: When Constantinople falls, the British Fleet will enter the Black Sea, and then Rumania is lost. But has the Foreign Office really done everything possible to keep hold of Rumania?

Von Stumm (Under-Secretary to the Foreign Office): As soon as the Entente establishes military contact with Rumania, we can no longer hold it.

General Ludendorff: That is my opinion too.

The Chancellor: I now come to a further question: How is the Entente off for reserves?

Colonel Heye: Last week the French had 40 divisions, the English 25, the Americans 18, the Italians 1—apart from Portuguese, Poles and other auxiliary troops—together 87 divisions of reserves out of a total strength of 220 divisions.

General Ludendorff: We have 191 divisions on the Western front; the difference therefore consists not so much in the number of the divisions as in the relative strength. A French division is also quite weak, not considerably stronger than ours; an English division is stronger and the 40 American divisions are decidedly strong. The superiority in man-power which the Entente disposes of is therefore not adequately expressed in the number of the divisions.

The Chancellor: The eleventh question is: 'How long may attacks in mass on the Western front be expected to continue?'

General Ludendorff: They may be continued or they may stop. I have no idea which.

The Chancellor: Is the transfer of further Italians to the Western front probable?

General Ludendorff: It is possible, but not probable; the war-weariness in Italy is very great.

Count Roedern: Can the possibility of an Italian attack against Germany via Austria be excluded?

General Ludendorff: There is no physical impossibility in it; they could go through the Tyrol, but we need not consider this possibility just now—otherwise it will put us into a worse funk than we are in already. If Italians and Germans are to fight each other, that will probably happen only on the Western front.

The Chancellor: Must we form a new Eastern front?

General Ludendorff: In Serbia there are three of our divisions and two of Austrians, then there are the [?] troops

that have just got to the Danube. There is no danger at the moment. In a week the situation may be quite different.

THE CHANCELLOR: I mean an Eastern front against Russia?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: General Hoffmann states that there are no effective troops which could take the field against us there; but we must close the frontier and keep off marauders. It is possible that if we evacuate the Ukraine, the Bolshevists will get swelled heads and declare war on us. But that there is a Red army capable of fighting I do not believe.

THE CHANCELLOR: But the cordon is not effective, hundreds get through, in spite of it.

GENERAL HOFFMANN: Yes, with or without passport, genuine or forged.

THE CHANCELLOR: But a military break-through is not to be feared?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: No, from a military point of view I do not anticipate one.

THE CHANCELLOR: One more question: How many Americans arrive in France per month?

COLONEL HEYE: The average of the last few months is 250,000.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: In April, May and June it was 350,000.

THE CHANCELLOR: Has not the number increased since then?

COLONEL HEYE: At the beginning of the year the number was much smaller, perhaps 85,000 a month, then came the steep rise up to midsummer; after that it had certainly not risen any further.

THE CHANCELLOR: What will be the strength of the American army next spring?

COLONEL HEYE: The American Army Command puts the number of troops at 1,200,000 for the present, for next spring they count on having 2,300,000.

THE CHANCELLOR: And have they the necessary material?

COLONEL HEYE: Yes, if things go on as they have been,

you can count on their having that. American statistics have always been truthful.

THE CHANCELLOR: At what figure would you estimate the present strength of the enemy front in the West?

COLONEL HEYE: The French numbers have dropped considerably, the English will maintain themselves at their present strength, because they still for a time have reinforcements in hand. The American strength will keep increasing.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: The question of reinforcements is very difficult to judge of. Last year the English divisions still had twelve battalions, now they only have nine. It depends very much on the requirements of industry. For instance, after the defeat in March England had to call up the miners; if the lack of coal should now force her to release them again, the front will naturally be weakened. Political factors also influence the question; up to now they have not been able to call up the Irish. The conscription law is not being put into force there at present.

THE CHANCELLOR: I may take it then that up to next spring we can put into the field reinforcements up to the number of 600,000 or 700,000 men to the 1,100,000 men of the enemy, if I only count the Americans; and then perhaps there are the Italians to be counted in too. Will our situation in the spring then be worse or better?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: On the figures alone, it will be no worse. But in addition there is the effect of the evacuation on our economic situation to be considered; if we retreat, our war industry will suffer very seriously indeed. It might all along have been foreseen that if we were to come out of the war with our present frontiers, we should be much worse off than formerly. This fact will show itself now on evacuation.

THE CHANCELLOR: Your Excellency has up to now only mentioned the man-power figures; but there is also the material to be considered, aeroplanes, tanks, etc.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: The aeroplanes of the two armies are already in a proportion of 1 : 3. In spite of that we maintain the superiority. The statistics which we make

of enemy losses fall far short of the reality, a fact which we can often verify from enemy news reports. I am not at all alarmed on that score.

THE CHANCELLOR : And the tanks next spring ?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : I hope, when our infantry has recovered again, that the tank panic, too, which had already been overcome and had come again, will be overcome once more. It came again in full force on 8th August, in consequence of the fog and I don't know what else. But when once the morale of the troops recovers, some formations, such as the Jaeger battalions and the Rifle Guards, treat tank-shooting as a regular sport. It is attractive too for material reasons, since the tanks are always well provisioned. We could not keep pace in tank building only because we had to build lorries first ; but by next spring we shall be better off in this respect.

COUNT ROEDERN : I assume that if we get a period of some sort of rest, the situation will improve, or would General Ludendorff's view still hold if we gradually have to fight our way back in the course of the next two or three months from our present lines on the Western front ?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : That depends on the speed—any retreat is the more costly in prisoners and material the quicker it has to be carried out. The gradual retirement of the Third, First, Seventh and Eighteenth Army caused us hardly any losses of men or material ; but where we have been driven back, as was the case with the Seventeenth and Second Army, this has had a decidedly weakening effect. We shorten our lines considerably, but the supply of all that the army lives on, all that it needs if it is to act, munitions and the rest, will show serious deterioration, because our industrial districts will be exposed to the enemy airmen.

Should it come to armistice negotiations, the agreement to evacuate will in itself act very unfavourably on the military situation.

SCHEÜCH (War Minister) : It must be conceded that the withdrawal of the army to German soil will weaken it considerably ; not only because there will be less oppor-

tunity of producing all that the army needs for the struggle, but also from the point of view of the quality and morale of the troops. Close contact with a home population, which is depressed by heavy quartering demands, is depressing to the army too. The same conditions would arise along the whole length of the frontier, as now obtain in Alsace—and even worse. The standard of life of the population, too, would be very much lowered.

ADMIRAL SCHEER: I reported yesterday upon the position of the navy, and now I suppose I ought also to give some account of conditions in the fleet, because these are of importance for deciding whether we should accept the armistice conditions which Wilson makes. In the last two years the fleet has been merely subsidiary to the submarine war, and has maintained itself all the while in readiness for action. If the supply of workmen were improved, we could double or even treble the submarine building programme. Now comes Wilson's demand that we should give up the submarine war. To yield would mean the giving up of a very important means of pressure, and of a consideration which might induce him to accept the armistice while leaving us in our present military position. It is at any rate clear that the army can hold out where it is. Thus we do not need to accept Wilson's second condition.

THE CHANCELLOR: Your Excellency once spoke of 40,000 workmen as the necessary figure. Would you be able to get so many if the War Minister calls up 600,000 men?

ADMIRAL SCHEER: Up to 1st December we only need 15,000 or 16,000 men.

THE CHANCELLOR: And when must you have the 40,000 men?

ADMIRAL SCHEER: Not until the summer. Even with the first 16,000 we shall be able to increase the monthly launching figure from ten to sixteen.

THE CHANCELLOR: Finally I should like to permit myself the following question. If all the measures which Your Excellency recommends are taken, and if the front holds out for the next few months, is Your Excellency of the opinion

that in the course of next year we shall have produced a situation better than our present one ? We must realize that any effort we may now make which does not pay in the last result, is a waste of effort ; we shall be responsible for the situation which will arise out of it, and we must look this situation boldly in the face. Shall we next year be able to finish the war on better terms than we can now ?

General Ludendorff : Any effort we may make at the moment improves our situation.

Admiral Scheer : I think we all have a general impression that the submarine war is making itself very distinctly felt, especially in Italy. Soon its effects, particularly on America, will be still more marked. But if we accept the conditions which have been put to us, we shall be throwing all these advantages away.

The Chancellor : That is no answer to the question that I put to you, viz., Shall we end the war under better conditions if we yield to the wishes of the Supreme Command. We are not yet dealing with the answer to Wilson's Note.

Admiral Scheer : Our situation will improve, because that of the enemy will get worse. That is just why the enemy wants to finish up this autumn.

Count Roedern : It has so often been asserted that the conditions of life in enemy countries have deteriorated, but there has been little sign that this has in any way influenced the course of the war. Will all that be now so very different ? Has account been taken of the fact that we are losing the Flanders coast and also the submarine base in the Mediterranean, now that Austria is making peace ? Can the increase of submarine production make good this loss ?

Admiral Scheer : The loss of the two submarine bases in Flanders and in the Mediterranean has in my opinion and in the opinion of my colleagues no effect whatever on our submarine warfare. On the contrary the more we concentrate on the immediate neighbourhood of the British Isles, the more effective the war is. Up to now we have succeeded in keeping the way to England open, though only with considerable exertion.

I cannot, of course, predict that the enemy will have collapsed by this or that definite date. Our object must be to intensify the effects which have already been produced, and to keep the enemy continually under pressure—then the political effects will soon make themselves felt.

Count Roedern : A number of definite undertakings upon the effects of the submarine war have been attributed, quite erroneously no doubt, to the Naval Command. But one undertaking was certainly made, namely that they would be able to prevent the transport of American troops. This particular undertaking has not been kept. The Minister of Marine of the time answered our question on this point roughly as follows : ' Let the American troops come, they will make a welcome target for us.' But this has proved to be entirely false.

Are we really still justified in rating the effects on English economic life so high ? When once the Americans bring themselves to send only 150,000 men a month instead of 250,000, the provisioning of England will become considerably easier. There must be some source of error here. It it perhaps due to having underestimated the speed of American shipbuilding ?

Admiral Scheer : I only know the statement of the Minister through the Press. I only know that he did not put the estimated figures of American troops high, probably because he considered that their maintenance on French soil would be difficult. Submarines cannot be directed merely against transports, they must use their torpedoes in such a way as to destroy the greatest possible amount of tonnage.

(The Chancellor leaves the Chair to the Vice-Chancellor.)

Von Payer (Vice-Chancellor) : Our impression of the military situation is to-day decidedly more favourable than at the beginning of the month. Is this fact due to reasons of a purely military kind ?

General Ludendorff : At the front there was the unsuccessful enemy attack of yesterday and the day before.

The enemy did not make a proper bite. Had he done everything he could have done, we should have been beaten. At this point the fighting spirit of the Entente was no longer up to the mark.

Then the Americans are suffering from severe influenza. It is true that it is beginning to spread in our army too, and in a very serious form. Our troops are tired, and a man who is tired succumbs more easily than a man who is fresh.

(The Chancellor takes the Chair again.)

THE CHANCELLOR : Thus the situation is not the same as it was on 5th October, when we were induced to make the peace offer to Wilson ?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : I have the impression that before we take upon us through this note conditions that are too hard to be borne, we ought to tell the enemy that they will have to fight for such conditions.

THE CHANCELLOR : And when they have been fought for, shall we not have to face even worse ?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : There can be no worse.

THE CHANCELLOR : O yes, there can—the invasion and devastation of Germany.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : We have not come to that yet.

COUNT ROEDERN : Up to now we have only talked of a victory or a defeat, but there is still a third possibility—a slow retreat on our part. Now that is the most probable event, if in fact we have no reason to fear an enemy break-through. I regard it as equally improbable that we shall throw the enemy back. Supposing, then, that we fill up the gaps, that our power of resistance will be strengthened—will America then be induced to offer better terms. America is well aware we are using up our last reserves. She will bide her time.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : But how does the situation look in the other countries ? I hear from an agent that England and France are seriously alarmed that the war might outlast this month. Germany will still be able to contain the Entente on foreign soil. Their fear of a reversal of fortune is very great.

SOLF: I have to give the Chancellor responsible advice upon the tone and contents of the note which we shall have to draft for Wilson. For this task I am not really any better prepared after hearing General Ludendorff than I was before.

At the beginning of the month the political government of the Empire was coerced by the Supreme Command into requesting an armistice and proposing peace to the enemy. Against the Chancellor's will and his better judgment, he had to make up his mind to give his name to this step. Then came the counter-questions, and then, too, the view was maintained that in our answer we simply had to keep to the conditions which had been proposed. Now comes Wilson's answer which puts us face to face with difficult decisions—and at once the appearance of things changes, and we are told that we can still hold out, yes, and even that if we survive the next four weeks, we shall actually be much better off than we were before.

This is all a riddle to me. What is the real reason why things are now possible which were then declared impossible?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF: I have always treated the shortage of men as the most important factor. To-day I hear that the shortage is not so great as I supposed. To-day I hear that within a reasonable space of time I can have 600,000 men. I will say nothing as to why I was not allowed to have them sooner. If I can have them now there will be an end of the present isolation of the army. In spite of the unfortunate events at the front, the situation is changing because the enemy's power of offensive is weakening.

I am as much as ever of the opinion that we must secure armistice negotiations if it can anyhow be managed. But we ought to accept only such terms of negotiation as permit of an orderly evacuation of the country—that requires at least a period of two or three months, and then we ought not to take upon us any condition which is intended to make a resumption of hostilities impossible. But it is to be presumed from the note that this is the intention—the conditions are to put us out of action. Before we commit ourselves

to anything further, the enemy must come out with his real conditions.

I do not mean a direct rupture with Wilson. On the contrary I suggest that we should ask them : ' Tell us then what you really want us to do. If you make demands that go against our national honour, if you want to make us incapable of fighting on, then in that case we must answer " No ".'

In saying this I do not give up my previous standpoint. I only ask that the measures which the War Minister has proposed may quickly be carried through.

SOLF : But these measures had already been agreed on then (at the beginning of the month).

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : All the time since April and even earlier I have had to fight to get men. I have not been given them. It is a fact that we have been getting 70,000 men a month too few. If this deficit is supplied, and the offensive power of the enemy weakens, then we shall no longer be obliged to accept any terms whatever.

THE CHANCELLOR : Could the German Supreme Command put itself directly in touch with the American Command ?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : The Supreme Command does not lie in the hands of the Americans, but of Foch. Would it not be better to put one more inquiry to the Government ?

GENERAL SCHEÜCH : The time for asking Foch has not yet come. That would be an admission of defeat.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : I should like to call attention to a few points which are important for the prosecution of the war :

1. The territory under the Governor-General of Belgium must be made a military base. It will certainly be difficult to determine the competence of the different authorities. It is intended that the Governor-General should keep in his hand the internal administration, the relations to the Church and so on, but we shall no longer be able to respect the undertakings which we made at the time when we admitted the Food Commission. We must be honest and give notice

of this to the authorities to whom we then gave the undertakings. We shall have to tell them to send no more provisions into the country. That will have quite a good effect in Belgium. In Tournai the population was unwilling to evacuate the town because they said that peace was coming. But this notion must not be allowed to gain ground ; Belgium must be told that peace is still far off, and the horrors which are inseparable from war, may befall Belgium once again, so that 1914 will be child's play compared to it. It must be realized that even when the different commanders take the greatest pains, it is impossible to prevent all acts of violence in an army of four million men.

2. The question of demolitions. I have received telegrams on this subject both from Your Highness and from the Foreign Office. We have done all we could to keep the army within bounds—as was our duty—so long as this could be justified from a military point of view. It is for instance really unjustifiable to leave any houses undestroyed, since billets are a great advantage to the enemy. And then, too, the houses have often been destroyed by the French later on. In Lille the electric light, the water supply and the trams have been left undamaged, but telegraph, telephone and railway have been destroyed. It is the English aviators and the English big guns which do the worst destruction. We have sent on the material in question to the Foreign Office.

The army is not to be confused with a few barbarous individuals there may be in it. The High Command struggles against such barbarities. I would ask you to emphasize that in your note to Wilson ; the army has a right to it.

Von Waldow : If the agreements concerning the provisioning of Belgium are to be denounced, the whole matter will have to be very carefully investigated first.

General Ludendorff : I quite agree. But things cannot go on as they have been. The troops quarter themselves on the people and take their cows from the field and their food from the house. All that is unavoidable. Belgium must wake up from its peace dreamings and will then be quite a good

ally of ours. The more it experiences the horrors of war, the more it will feel the need of peace.

SCHEIDEMANN : Since slanderous imputations against our army have been spread throughout the enemy countries, and particularly in neutral territory, steps must be taken to counter them. I therefore think myself bound to suggest to Your Highness that it would have a good effect if an army order, basing itself on the previous orders, were once more to be issued, forbidding such destructions. Then—if the cow is taken, that is excusable, if the troops are to live—but unnecessary destruction, such as we unfortunately hear described by men on leave, for instance, the demolition of furniture, the cutting-up of pictures, the destruction of beds —all that must be put a stop to.

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : We have had four years of trench warfare and have had to take to dug-outs and wooden huts as rest-quarters for the troops. But it is no rest for them, if the dug-outs and huts remain empty. They must be furnished, and that is why the furniture is requisitioned. I regard that as allowable from a military point of view. How else can the troops rest ? Many errors have unfortunately been made. We are anxious to put a stop to them.

But as soon as the troops have gone, the inhabitants do their looting, since we cannot leave any arms behind us. Many unfortunate incidents have occurred. That, I regret to say, is true. But officially furniture is only allowed to be used for the quarters themselves.

We have taken securities back with us, but they are in safe keeping and will be given back. The picture collections have been brought back to Valenciennes. We would have brought them further back still for better protection, but at the request of the Foreign Office we left them on French soil.

THE CHANCELLOR : Could not the pictures be sent to Holland ?

GENERAL LUDENDORFF : We have remained in continual touch with the Foreign Office on this point and have investigated it from the point of view of international law. The Foreign Office told us not to take them out of the country,

that would be a kind of theft. The only exceptions are the consecrated vessels and other properties of the Church, which we have handed over for safe keeping to the Archbishop of Cologne.

THE CHANCELLOR: Has anyone any remark to make to the questions which we put to His Excellency General Ludendorff? Then I declare the meeting closed.

. . . . . .

Herren Haussmann and Groeber are said to have thanked General Ludendorff for having put them in better spirits. I, too, was glad that the panic of the first days of October had been overcome, but I was neither satisfied nor reassured by General Ludendorff's utterances.

I asked the General privately: 'Do you believe that next year we should be able to conclude the war on better terms than we can get to-day?'

The answer was a decisive 'Yes.'

'You then would look on the rupture of our relations to Wilson with equanimity?'

The answer was once more a decisive 'Yes.'

I was not convinced. The statement of the military, stripped of its embroideries, revealed the following situation:

A reversal of fortune in our favour is inconceivable.

The submarine war cannot bring it about.

We have lost the initiative. Nothing can give it us again—neither the Eastern troops whose fighting value for the West is in the highest degree doubtful, nor the remaining 600,000 men whom the Minister of War proposes to comb out. This draft will only be a real reinforcement if the morale improves. But at present the morale at home is exceedingly bad, and there is misery which cannot be relieved.

In the most favourable event, the army would fight its way back without too great losses of men or material, and would take up its stand again on the line of the Meuse or on the German frontier.

But conditions would grow less favourable; the manu-

facture of munitions of war would suffer under air attacks upon the industrial district of the Rhine.

To-day the enemy is superior in man-power and material, and this superiority increases daily. Our air forces already stand to theirs in a relation of one to three, and we have still no effective defence against the tanks.

We must count upon having Italians against us on the Western front, and on the formation of a new Southern front.

The economic value of the Ukraine for the provision of the country is disputed. But it is certain that the army would suffer a severe loss of horses and oats, if it were evacuated. This evacuation of the East cannot be justified; the advantages which would accrue in the West would be disproportionately small.

A new Eastern front would probably not arise, owing to the inferiority of the Red Army, but the sacrifice of the Ukraine would presumably be regarded as a triumph for Bolshevism and would be a great source of encouragement for its propaganda.

Rumania is lost to us. When once its oil supplies fail, our stocks will only last a few months more, even if the Navy is prepared to pool its large stocks with the War Minister.

One single new factor in our favour—which had already been hinted at on the ninth—has to-day revealed itself—the offensive power of the enemy is flagging. In the course of the last few weeks, even two days ago, they could have forced their way through, but they did not do so, because they did not put out their strength to the utmost.

One might therefore sum up: The military situation had not improved since 5th October. But even to-day it was not as black as General Ludendorff had painted it on 29th September. We had no right to fly the white flag on 5th October; we had no reason to do so even to-day. But anyhow in a few months more the situation must be desperate.

The conclusion to be drawn was clear: The negotiations with Wilson must go on. Once we had turned to him, we must give him every chance to show his good will, whether we really believed in it or not; our condition forced us to

make the greatest sacrifices to obtain peace, but if dishonourable conditions were made for the armistice, then the people must be called out to make a last stand.

This would be the last struggle of despair.

One thing was clear to me : General Ludendorff was not the man to lead such a desperate struggle.

In the course of this meeting I had lost confidence in Ludendorff as a man. He ought to have looked the situation ruthlessly in the face, without any regard for his own prestige. An heroic honesty was the only thing that could save us.

But General Ludendorff had treated our wish to hear the opinion of other army commanders as a personal insult, and had threatened the resignation of himself and of the Field-Marshal (Hindenburg). I am aware that Staff circles have a prejudice against councils of war. ' In Council of War,' says Frederick the Great, ' the timidest view always wins.' This remark had lost its relevance to our situation ; it was 29th September that had brought the victory of pessimism because no Council of War had been called. I have good reason to believe that the armistice offer would never have been made if at the end of September, say Gallwitz, Lossberg or Schulenburg had been called to Spa.

To-day General Ludendorff had not breathed a word about the armistice offer and its disastrous effects in Germany and in the outside world, while he had treated the armistice conversations in Berlin as responsible for the encouragement of the enemy and the deterioration of the morale at the front.

The fundamental evils of the situation were referred to in his military exposé, but they were disguised and glossed over by reassuring phrases ; if an unpleasant fact had had to be admitted at the beginning of the sentence, at the end there would always be a reference to some favourable possibility, and this often was merely specious :

> ' If the army lasts out the next four weeks, till winter comes on, we shall be well out of it.
>
> There is the possibility, but not the probability of further Italians being transferred to the Western front. The war weariness in Italy is very great. An Italian attack against Germany via the Tyrol is physically not impossible, " but we

need not consider this possibility just now—otherwise it will put us into a worse funk than we are in already! If Italians and Germans are to fight each other, that will probably happen only on the Western front."

We should not exaggerate the value of the Americans. They are certainly bad enough, but we have beaten them up to now, even where we were in a very great numerical inferiority. It is true that the proportion between the numbers continually alters for the worse; but our men have no fear of the Americans.

The aeroplanes of the two armies are already in a proportion of one to three. In spite of that we maintain the superiority. The statistics of enemy losses which we make fall far short of the reality, a fact which we can often verify from enemy news reports. I am not at all alarmed on that score.

I hope when our infantry has recovered again, that the tank panic too, which had already been overcome and had come again, will be overcome once more. . . . But if once the morale of the troops recovers, some formations, such as the Jaeger battalions and the Rifle Guards, treat tank shooting as a regular sport. It is attractive, too, for material reasons, since the tanks are always well provisioned. We could not keep pace in tank building, only because we had to build lorries first, but by next spring we shall be better off in this respect.'

This is no report by a responsible commander to a responsible Government, but a deliberate attempt to create 'atmosphere.' I had finally tried to pin the General to a definite conclusion. I asked:

'Thus the situation is not the same as it was on 5th October, when we were induced to make the peace offer to Wilson?'

In his answer Ludendorff simply disregarded the question: 'I have the impression that before we take upon us, through this note, conditions that are too hard to be borne, we ought to tell the enemy that they will have to fight for such conditions.'

Here at last Solf gave expression to the general mistrust: 'This is all a riddle to me. What is, then, the real reason why things are now possible which then were declared impossible?'

Here Ludendorff had once more the opportunity of speaking out frankly. He could for instance have said:

I have to-day regained my nerve and my confidence. From 29th of September to 3rd October I had lost both. I had an unexampled responsibility. The degree of tension in which I have lived for four years went beyond human power. There neither was then nor is there to-day any necessity for precipitate action. It is true that in any case we must inevitably collapse by the spring of next year at the latest. I regret having let loose the panic in army and people. Help me to repair the catastrophe of the armistice offer. I see a new and hopeful factor, the enemy's power of attack is slackening. If we show ourselves capable of a war of desperation, perhaps then the enemy will not muster up the necessary energies for a war of annihilation, and will give us a peace which allows us to live.

Instead of that General Ludendorff replied: I have always treated the shortage of men as the most important factor. To-day I hear that within a reasonable space of time I can have 600,000 men.

The facts to be set against this assertion, are these:

1. It was not primarily the question of reinforcements which led General Ludendorff to make the armistice offer. If it had been, why did he not summon the War Minister, von Stein, to Spa? He had forced the request for the armistice through, because he feared a military catastrophe and an immediate one.

2. It was not true that General Ludendorff heard for the first time 'to-day,' *i.e.* on 17th October, that General Scheüch could find him 600,000 men from home. He knew that since the evening of 10th October,[1] and in spite of it he agreed to the evacuation demands of the enemy.

[1] General Scheüch in the *Deutsche Allegmeine Zeitung*, quoted in the *Preuss. Zeitung* of 3rd November, 1919, No. 532, evening edition: 'What else did my offer of reinforcements mean but that I supported fighting on not only in words but with the necessary resources! When I made this offer on the evening of 10th October, 1918, the Supreme Command would not at first accept it, for fear of a resulting shortage of material. Two days later they caught at it greedily—that is the only word for it. And yet it was the essential condition of any conceivable attempt to fight on, after the events of 28th and 29th September onwards.' As far as we know, no reply was ever made to this.

The Cabinet came together again in the afternoon. I was not present at the beginning, and Herr von Payer took the chair. Haussmann,[1] as was his custom, summed up pointedly the change in the High Command's attitude : ' Their former idea was : diplomacy to the rescue to avoid a military catastrophe ; their present idea : rather a military catastrophe than accept dishonourable conditions. This is a big change.' And yet the Supreme Command did not desire any rupture of the armistice negotiations.

From Waldow to Scheidemann there was complete agreement as to the consequences to be drawn from the military exposé of General Ludendorff :

First : Wilson must not be given a pretext for breaking off negotiations, that is, concessions in the submarine question are necessary. There were differences of opinion as to how far these concessions should go.

Secondly : The acceptance of dishonouring conditions would lay us low for ever. ' Rather an utter defeat than a surrender ' (Friedberg) must be the fundamental idea of the note.

The representative of the Supreme Command, Colonel von Haeften, made a statement to the effect that the view of the Ministers was in essential agreement with that of the Supreme Command.

I entered the conference room a few minutes before General Ludendorff, and was able to support the prevailing view by a telegram which I had just received from abroad :

> ' If our front held out, England would be inclined to give its support to Wilson's action. The English, too, had a feeling that it would be better to end the war sooner rather than later. The rivalry between England and America was a factor in the situation. It would perhaps serve the cause of peace if we were to hold out a few months more.

On the reappearance of General Ludendorff and Colonel Heye,[2] Payer touched upon the question, as to the presumable

[1] Cf. Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 257.

[2] Minutes of the discussion of the afternoon of 17th October, *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 58.

effect which the expected catastrophe in Austria would have upon our military situation. As in the morning, an answer was given which only confused the issue :

> ' According to information received from General von Cramon the spirit of the Austrians was surprisingly good. The desertion of Austria would naturally have very unfavourable effects ; whether, indeed, it would affect our troops was very questionable, since even the desertion of Bulgaria had made no particular impression on them. In spite of this he was in favour of continuing the peace negotiations, having regard to the threatened desertion of Austria. However, he did not take the view that the situation of Austria compelled us to accept any conditions whatever. Certainly Austria's desertion would free the Italian army ; that, of course, would be a bad thing. But then too, there would always be time enough to throw up the sponge.'

Payer suggested that we might have to reckon with sudden disasters at the front, which would compel us to make peace at once.

Ludendorff replied that, were the front so secure that there was absolutely nothing to be feared, then this whole peace action would never have been taken. But he had now once more declared expressly that the said peace action was to be continued. We should perhaps be compelled to retire still further. But he did not fear any collapse resulting. But should the situation worsen in spite of all, then it would be necessary to follow up the threads which had been spun. But now recent military experiences should lead us to look on the situation rather more calmly. If in fact we were to suffer a defeat, we should just have to capitulate at once. It might become dangerous if we were to suffer a defeat before Verdun, otherwise he did not think the danger so very great.

To Solf's question as to whether, in our answer, we could take a firmer line, one more corresponding to our dignity, in face of the danger that Wilson might break off, Ludendorff declared as decisively as possible that we should take this risk ; our note ought to be the test of whether Wilson's intentions were honourable or not.

When General Ludendorff and Colonel Heye had left the

meeting I asked my colleagues to state whether they still thought it necessary to hear the other Army Commanders before sending off our note to Wilson, or whether they were prepared to wait for that till the arrival of Wilson's answer. They declared unanimously that for the present moment they would be content with the exposé of General Ludendorff alone.

Thus the discussions ended apparently in a great measure of agreement of principle. Among the public, too, the gulf between Left and Right seemed to have been bridged once more, after the first shock of Wilson's second note had been overcome. The manifesto of the Social Democratic Party Executive, which appeared next morning,[1] strengthened my hopes that the country would back up its Government :

> ' The situation of our country is terribly grave. The South-Eastern front has collapsed and on the Western front the massed armies of the Entente, which dispose of the man-power and the economic resources of three continents, beat against our troops with a fearful superiority of numbers and of material.
>
> Germany and the German people are in danger of being sacrificed to the lust of conquest of the Anglo-French reactionaries and annexationists.
>
> Our declaration of the Fourth of August 1914 holds more than ever to-day : " We will not leave our country in the lurch in its hour of danger." The German people will never reconcile itself to a peace of violence which humiliates it and wounds its vital interests.'

The conclusion of the manifesto was unfortunately spoiled by the suspicion expressed that the big landowners were keeping back foodstuffs—an unjustifiable accusation which at this moment meant a regrettable disturbance of the internal peace. The agrarian von Waldow had in this crisis gone so far as to put himself at the disposal of the Parliamentary Government, and as Secretary of State for Food was doing everything to urge the big landowners to the utmost exertions to secure the people's food supply.

The polemics of the Right, too, showed faults of taste ; the Government's duty of keeping silence was not an easy

[1] *Vorwaerts* of 18th October, 1918.

one ; the Press of the ' Fatherland Party ' kept talking of ' the Majority's humble supplication to Wilson '—but this malicious abuse was really but symptomatic of the open wounds left by years of poisonous party-politics, which, one hoped, had been left behind us. It was encouraging to read the many manifestoes, published at this time, in which you could only tell the writer's party from his signature.

It is true that, beyond the patriotic Left, there was a daily growing mass of people who wanted peace at any price. It was impossible either to estimate their numbers or to calculate their power. Their main strength was certainly drawn from that part of the population which was suffering most. ' What does North Berlin live on ? What does East Berlin live on ? ' [1] Malcontents and disciples of Wilson's from all camps joined forces. Young and highly-paid munition-workers feared that their ' indispensability ' was being threatened, and came out in open opposition to the war.

I noticed that Scheidemann's nervous side-glances towards the Left kept getting more frequent.

[1] Scheidemann's words at the plenary meeting, *vide supra*, p. 114.

CHAPTER VI

THE ABANDONMENT OF THE SUBMARINE WAR

From abroad we received conflicting messages as to the meaning of Wilson's note. 'The President demands the abdication of the Kaiser'—so I was informed from Switzerland and from Belgium, and my informants added a warning against letting ourselves be driven step by step in the matter of this inevitable abdication of Kaiser and Crown Prince. The Dutch correspondents persisted in asserting that the reduction of the Kaiser to the ornamental position held by the King of England, would satisfy the 'preliminary conditions' demanded by Wilson. In one point all informants were agreed—that at the moment a fierce struggle was raging within and among the Allied countries as to whether the armistice should be granted or not. It depended on the resisting power of the German front and home population, whether the will to peace would have its way. Lucius telegraphed from Stockholm to the Foreign Office on 16th October :[1] The continual retreat led our enemies to put forth continually increasing demands. In particular the French and Americans wanted to carry the war into the enemy's country ; even a single unimportant German success now would strengthen considerably the influence of the saner elements in England.

On 18th October one of my political associates returned from a journey which he had made to the Hague to secure information. His exposé was for me particularly valuable because he had himself been dealing with an active allied diplomat, to the exclusion of the usual 'go-between,' on which our embassies were necessarily dependent. The conclusions drawn in this report were employed in the

[1] Cf. *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 53.

following circular of the Field-Marshal's,[1] to whom I at once sent on the information :

' There exists at present a sharp difference between Wilson and Foch. Wilson wants a Just Peace of reconciliation and mutual understanding. Foch wants Germany's complete humiliation and the satisfaction of French vanity.

Any consolidation of the German front, any hardening of the German diplomatic attitude strengthens Wilson's position, every sign of military or political weakness strengthens Foch.

Wilson demands concessions in two points only :

1. Submarine war. No more passenger ships to be sunk.[2]

2. The " democratization " of Germany. (Not the dethronement of the Kaiser, but constitutional monarchy, the Crown to be placed in the same position as in England.)

Wilson does not desire a military humiliation of Germany. Foch, on the other hand, intends by all means to secure complete military capitulation and *humiliation* (satisfaction of French lust of revenge).

It depends entirely on Germany's attitude, which of the two parties wins the upper hand. If the front holds out and our diplomacy takes a dignified line, Wilson will win. Any concession to Foch's demands means Germany's annihilation and the break-down of all hopes of peace.

England is inclined to take up a mediating position. The chief difficulty in the way of the peace step lies with France.

Should the negotiations break down through the fault of the French Imperialists, this would presumably lead to the French Socialists and the English Liberals and Labour Party joining forces with Wilson.

Wilson's task of attaining a Peace of Understanding is made very difficult, through the coincidence in time of the " Democratization " with the peace step. This is interpreted as weakness, and has strengthened Foch's position. Friends of a just peace now advise us to slow down the pace everywhere, especially in our requests for peace and armistice, and to do everything to enable the front to hold out and the process of democratization to go on calmly and convincingly.'

[1] Cf. *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 59 c.

[2] I add here the marginal note of the Foreign Office expert (for America) von Haniel (22nd October) ; " here Hindenburg implicitly supports the restriction of submarine warfare."

This political Memorandum was sent to the various Army Commands together with the following covering letter :

'GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,
18*th October*, 1918.

CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE
ARMY IN THE FIELD.

BY OFFICER.

Enclosed I send for information an opinion upon the political situation which I have received from a confidential source, and *which I regard as correct*.[1] It emphasizes once more the importance of holding our present positions for the successful issue of negotiations now being carried on. It is the business of the armies each to hold its own front.

The unity of our home front can now be regarded as assured. This is proved by the expressions used by the Press of all parties, with the exception of the Independent Social Democrats and of the Poles.[1] The Ministry of War has promised to send up further drafts and to call up for the purpose all the forces at home which can anyhow be dispensed with.

I ask you to exercise the greatest strictness in seeing that all formations of men passed for front service be taken from the bases and from the supply services and brought up into the line.'

What was the Supreme Command aiming at when it issued this instruction ? Primarily, of course, to make it clear to the army that the success of the peace action which had been begun depended upon their power to hold out. But one object must also have been to impress the front with the necessity of strengthening Wilson's hands in the councils of the Allies by adopting measures of Democratization and by restricting the submarine war.

I gave the following instructions for the formulation of the answer :

'1. Our answer to the President must be so formulated that if Wilson rejects it, this rejection can be used as an appeal for a " National Rising " on the part of the German people.

2. What kind of rejection on the President's part would *fail* to produce this result ?

[1] My Italics.

(*a*) If the President in his note is in a position to contend that our concessions in the matter of the submarine war have been insufficient. The submarine war is to-day a red rag to the German people. They regard it as the root of all their misfortunes, and expect no good from it. To raise a *levée en masse* for the retention of submarine warfare would be unthinkable.

(*b*) If Wilson can make it clear that our democratization has not gone far enough.

3. Let us assume that we have made Wilson sufficient concessions in the matter of Submarine Warfare and of Democratization.[1] Then, supposing we get a rejection from Wilson in consequence of the demands of the Allied armies, the following situation will result :

The enemy peoples will have to fight on, no longer for Wilson's "just peace," but for Foch's "military glory." When this fact became evident—and it would become evident, if Wilson refused—it would involve a tremendous weakening of the enemy's power to carry on the war. This would show itself not only in the munition factories, but also at the front.'

I instructed Geheimrat Simons personally to make it as clear as possible that we had now had enough of interference with our internal affairs. I hoped thus to prevent Wilson putting any further question as to the position of the Kaiser, or at the least to awaken the sense of honour of the German people in case the demand for abdication should still come. Together we produced on 18th October the following draft :

'The German Government returns the following answer to President Wilson's note of 14th October :

1. The German Government in declaring itself ready to evacuate the occupied territories had always assumed that the details of procedure and the conditions of armistice would have to be judged of and discussed by military experts and that the result of such discussions would have to correspond as far as possible to the present proportion of strength of the two fronts.

It is not clear from the President's words whether he rejects or admits the possibility of a speedy resolution of the technical questions of detail by means of discussions between

[1] In particular a revision of Article 11 of the Imperial Constitution was contemplated, cf. p. 168.

the military experts. If the President thinks fit to treat upon these points too by means of public exchange of notes, the German Government is prepared to accept such proposal. It however requests President Wilson in this case to make public the demands of the American Government and of the Allied Governments on this point, as soon as he is ready to begin mediation. The German Government assumes here that the President will not approve of any demands which either sacrifice the honour of the German people or which are incompatible with the idea of a just peace.

2. The President makes accusations against German methods of warfare by sea and land. To these the German Government replies as follows :

The German Government cannot approve of the torpedoing of passenger steamers. It has, therefore, sent out such instructions to all submarine commanders as should make the torpedoing of passenger ships impossible. The submarine war will from now on be carried on according to the principles of cruiser warfare, such as will secure the lives of non-combatants.

In this connection the German Government would remind the President that German non-combatants are to-day suffering under methods of naval warfare which are in conflict both with the President's principles of the freedom of the seas and with the international law which has hitherto obtained.

The President further charges us with senseless devastation of the war areas, with the plundering of towns and villages and with the deportation of their inhabitants. To this the German Government replies :

Some demolitions have been necessary for the covering of our retreat, and as such are permitted by international law. Apart from this, the German troops in Belgium and France have, in confirmation of orders already in force, again received the strictest instructions not to destroy private property, to protect the population to the best of their ability, and not to lay hands on any of their goods. No army command can undertake to guarantee that no excesses shall ever occur ; where such can be ascertained, the perpetrators of them are punished.

The flight of the civil population is by no means due to German instigation ; on the contrary the German commanders have tried to induce the inhabitants to remain, where this was anyhow compatible with their safety. In spite of this a great exodus of the population takes place through fear of the dangers of the war-zone. In this case we have facilitated their evacua-

tion to the best of our power, and here we have been assisted by neutral commissions. We shall request these neutral commissions to conduct a rigorous investigation of the facts which form the basis of the President's accusations.

The German Government here expresses the wish that hereafter at the Peace Conference such neutral commissions may be entrusted with the investigation of every charge of atrocities and violations of international law which the belligerent parties have made against each other in the course of the war. Such an impartial examination would show up the guilty and the calumniators on all sides.

3. As an essential condition for peace, the President insists on the cessation of arbitrary government in Germany. Here, too, the German Government offers the President a frank statement of the case. The Government of Germany was up to now based on Authority ; this was not due to any arbitrary action on the part of the legal authorities, but to the fact that the great mass of the people accepted them, without feeling any desire for full responsibility of its own. The war has changed all this. In the representative assembly a strong political will has grown up and has brought about a fundamental change in German constitutional practice. The decision upon all questions vital to the nation, in particular questions of war and peace, rests to-day with Parliament. Already all essential powers are placed in the hands of a Government which can be brought to account for its actions. The answer which the Chancellor gives to the President is thus given in the name of a Government which is responsible to the people. The formation of the present Government is evidence of this development, which is being embodied in alterations of the Constitution.

The President asks for some guarantee that this new system will last.

Such guarantee cannot be given by Acts of Parliament alone. The security for the endurance of the new system on trial in Germany for the first time, lies in the declared will and the inner conviction of the great majority of the German people which stands behind it. A relapse is only to be feared, if Germany, to please opinion in other countries should impose upon itself, in insincere haste, a form of Constitution which did not correspond to its own peculiar character and history.'

With this answer I felt that I had given expression, both to the will for peace and to the wounded self-respect of the

nation ; I felt sure of the consent of my colleagues, and confidently counted on the approval of the High Command.

Twenty-four hours later I had nearly the whole of my Cabinet against me and found myself in such violent conflict with the Army Command and with the Navy, that I was compelled to put to the Kaiser the question of confidence.

Early on 19th October Solf had approved the draft of Simons and submitted it in the Cabinet in his capacity of head of his Department. Friedberg declared at once that the note would not suit the internal situation ; Count Roedern asserted that the note was undignified ; Scheidemann feared its challenging tone—that ' Wilson would ring off.' The clause which demanded a neutral investigation of the ' atrocity charges ' called forth the loudest protest. Solf, supported by Roedern and Scheidemann, appealed to the opinion of Geheimrat Kriege of the Legal Department of the Foreign Office ; he had declared, ' if we demand this investigation, we shall get the whole reparation bill thrown at our heads.' Scheidemann nearly had a fit at the conclusion: How could one dream of speaking of the ' revocability of the present system ' or of ' relapses ' ; that would but arouse the enemy's suspicions ! However the dispute as to tone and detail of the note soon gave place to a radical difference of principle ; Admiral von Scheer and Ritter von Mann (Minister of Marine) declared that to carry on the submarine war on the lines of cruiser warfare was impossible ; to accept Wilson's demand meant giving up the submarine war altogether. They objected to any concession in the submarine question. Erzberger supported the position of the Naval Command. In vain I warned them of the danger of new counter-questions, and urged the necessity of strengthening Wilson against Anglo-French pressure. Scheidemann, Haussmann and Scheüch supported me, and after the session the War Minister made one more attempt to convince the Minister of Marine that the submarine war was not worth breaking off negotiations for.

The ambassadors who had been invited to attend expressed themselves in the same sense. Count Metternich, Dr. Rosen

and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau declared unanimously that it was self-contradictory to want to negotiate further with Wilson and at the same time to stick to the intensified submarine war. Count Bernstorff, who still could not leave Constantinople, had telegraphed to the same effect. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau spoke impressively of the fix in which we found ourselves to-day. The armistice offer was as good as a capitulation. He described the devastating effect it had had upon the German representatives abroad when one day they woke up and read that Germany had asked Wilson for an armistice. The first was the decisive step ; now there was no alternative but to follow out the path we had once set foot upon.

Our former ambassador in London, Count Wolff Metternich, stated his opinion with the steadfastness and clearness which one had come to expect from him. He said among other things :

> ' The President demands that no more passenger steamers shall be sunk—otherwise no negotiations. If we are to make the best of our chance of obtaining an armistice—and our situation compels us to try to do so—we must declare that the naval forces have received orders to sink no more passenger steamers, adding that we cannot guarantee the order having actually reached all the submarine commanders until a certain period has elapsed. I am well aware that the navy regards such an order as equivalent to the abandonment of the submarine war altogether. Well, if that is the case, it must be abandoned. It is out of the question that the President would treat with us any more, if we did not yield on this point. The American millions with all their equipment have been transported to Europe in spite of the unrestricted submarine war. Their losses have been infinitesimal. No one can any longer seriously suppose that the unrestricted submarine war could still produce a decision in our favour. Away with it then, since it is an insuperable obstacle to the initiation of an armistice.[1]

After the ambassadors had made their statement, the whole

[1] Statement at the meeting of 19th October, printed in the monthly *Europaeische Gespraeche*, quoted from the *Berliner Tageblatt* of 24th February, 1927.

Cabinet was convinced that the intensified submarine war must be given up. But since the assertion of the navy that to carry on a cruiser war with submarines was technically impossible was not to be refuted, Solf proposed the solution: Public order to be: No more passenger steamers to be torpedoed; with simultaneous secret order to give up submarine war altogether. The formulation: 'To avoid anything which could render the work of peace more difficult, the German Government has caused orders to be sent to all submarine commanders, forbidding the torpedoing of passenger ships' found the approval of the Cabinet. These words were intended to say that we reserved to ourselves the right of taking up again the weapon we had laid down, should the armistice action fail.

Admiral Scheer had not given way, but after the end of the conference with the ambassadors had called on Supreme Command and Kaiser for help. On the night of 19th-20th October General Ludendorff went over to the side of the navy.

Colonel von Haeften submitted to me on the morning of 20th October the following telephone message:

'By telephone from the Supreme Command, 20*th October*, 1918.
1 a.m.[1]

To the Imperial Chancellor.
(Through Col. von Haeften.)

There is no alteration in the situation. Turkey has opened separate negotiations. Austria-Hungary will soon follow suit. We shall very soon stand alone in Europe. The Western front is in a state of the greatest tension. A break-through remains possible, though I do not expect it. If we disengage from the enemy in Belgium and if the promised reinforcements are drafted, a stubborn resistance can be organized, calculated to prolong the struggle on the Western front and while not securing us a definite victory, at least to save us from utter ruin. But even if we were to be beaten, we should not be seriously worse off than if we yield everything now.

The question must be faced, whether the German people is ready to fight to the last man for its honour, not only in words, and so to secure itself the chance of a revival later, or

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 63, erroneously put '1 p.m.'

whether it will let itself be driven to capitulation and extinction *without* having put out its last ounce of strength ?

To abandon the submarine war without receiving any compensatory advantages, which is what the note concedes, would be to take the latter course.

Apart from this it would have extremely unfavourable effects upon the morale of our army, which has been sorely tried in the recent hard struggles. I therefore cannot agree to this point. If it is true that the Government, in giving execution to this view, must reckon with the negotiations with Wilson being broken off, then it must make up its mind to fight out the struggle for our honour to the very last man.

In spite of the difficult situation of the army, I can conceive no other possible course, and I sincerely hope that the Government, in making this grave decision, will have the whole of the country behind it.

I propose the following alterations of detail in the text which has been transmitted to me :

1. Paragraph 3 must read : " Destructions due to military actions will always be necessary and are permitted by international law."

2. The following is to be added to paragraph 5 after the words " investigate " : " It has already caused investigations to be made by such neutral commissions, *e.g.* in Tournai, Valenciennes and elsewhere. The conclusions of these commissions have proved the falsity of the charges made against us of having violated international law." '

I was dumbfounded at the tone of this manifesto—at the words : ' Will the German people let itself be driven to capitulation and extinction *without* having put out its last ounce of strength ? ' These were words which would have sounded well in the mouth of a general who on 29th September had stood firm in the face of a wavering Government, but not in the mouth of General Ludendorff, who had compelled a Government that was resolved on National Defence to hoist the white flag.

It was not true to say that with the abandonment of the submarine war *we were setting* foot on the path of capitulation ; General Ludendorff had already pushed me on to this path—now he wanted to go back ; so did I—but here there was no room to turn. I was convinced that we must go still

further on this unhappy course, before we should have the opportunity of pulling the horses round.

I spent a good part of the morning in supplying Colonel von Haeften with arguments which should convince General Ludendorff of the necessity of this concession.

On the telephone he explained to his chief how he had been convinced by the news from abroad that if the note did not include the concession that passenger steamers would be spared, Wilson would break off negotiations. The President must have a card in hand which he could play against the demands of the French army for a dishonourable capitulation of the German army. Only thus can the desired end of an honourable and speedy armistice be attained, or the conditions for giving a strong moral stimulus to the German people be realized.

> 'Such a moral stimulus is absolutely necessary to get the people to exert itself to the very uttermost. These conditions have not yet been realized. It is probable, according to messages to hand, that the abandonment of the submarine war would be demanded not only by our enemy, but at home, and even from our own streets, if this could purchase peace. The submarine war is thoroughly unpopular. In the opinion of the Chancellor, the answer to the note, should it contain humiliating demands which injure the honour of the army, would provide this necessary stimulus for the mass of the people.'[1]

It was all in vain. I cannot deny that the impression gained upon me that General Ludendorff was less concerned to alter our decision than to register a protest against it.[2] In

[1] From the correspondence between Supreme Command and Chancellor: telephone message of Colonel von Haeften to General von Bartenwerffer.

[2] Justice compels us to add, that at the time the Supreme Command was being worried and irritated by tactless hints as to the origin of the armistice offer, with which the Press of the Majority parties replied to the attacks of the Right. The Supreme Command could quote, to corroborate its view as to the unfavourable effect of such revelation, the report of our Minister in Berne: 'The French propaganda against the armistice makes special use of the argument that the German High Command assents unreservedly to the evacuation—or even desires it, to ensure itself favourable military prospects, since it will thus be able to save Germany's army from complete defeat and its war material from loss. The armistice must thus be dangerous and inacceptable to the Entente. In this sense the enemy exploit to the utmost the repeated assertions of the German

the meantime the Cabinet had met without me. Its temper was one of wild indignation. Conrad Haussmann summed up the general impression in the words : ' General Ludendorff has outflanked the Government, both strategically and tactically.' Payer exclaimed : ' I did my very best at the time to oppose the attitude of the Supreme Command. *One has a right to take one's own honour into consideration ; and now we are to be made responsible for losing the already lost war.* We are to take the responsibility before the bar of history.' Erzberger now demanded a public declaration to the effect that the request for armistice had been exacted by the Supreme Command, otherwise the Government would be accused by the soldiers of having sacrificed them to the American shells. The Cabinet must demand that the Supreme Command accept the note without reservation. Count Roedern alone maintained that we could not compel the Supreme Command to change its view ; it would suffice if we did not allow ourselves to be influenced by them.

Press that the Military Authorities (Ludendorff) assent to the evacuation.' (*Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 51.) The Field-Marshal (Hindenburg) directed to me on 20th October a moving telegram : ' From numberless verbal and written reports I learn that my name is being misused to spread among the people feelings of utter despair. Utterances are attributed to me, such as " We have no more power of resistance left," " We could not hold the army together any longer," " It was only a question of hours," and the like. Besides not being able to look on such a misuse of my name with indifference, I hold that the prosecution of the war renders a contradiction of such reports necessary. I therefore ask Your Highness to publish a statement, in the form which seems to you most suitable, to the effect that all such utterances imputed to me are pure inventions. Anyone who passes on such utterances must realize that he is thereby helping the enemy. VON HINDENBURG, *General Field-Marshal*.'

I answered :

' BERLIN, *24th October*, 1918.

I have had the honour to receive Your Excellency's telegram of the 20th inst. I have considered whether it would be advisable for me to make a statement in the Reichstag in the sense of Your Excellency's telegram. In this course, however, there would have been the risk of bringing these inventions to the ears of still wider circles. The strongest protests as to their falsity would not avail to prevent their *causing* unrest rather than allaying it. I have, therefore, preferred to avoid a public announcement, and have asked the War Minister to instruct the Generals Commanding Districts to counteract these false rumours by such means of propaganda as they have at their disposal. I have also taken care to provide all the civil News Agencies with the same instructions.'

Before midday a new draft note was submitted to me, which had been composed by the ministers in my absence. The patchwork which resulted from their 'collective' efforts adequately expressed my intentions *in principle*, but not in the least *in its tone*. Haussmann's warnings that the enemy, drunk with victory, ought to be brought to their senses by a perceptible reserve on our part, had been in vain.

I was engaged in a serious dispute with General Ludendorff as to the contents of the note; was I to embark on a simultaneous struggle with my Cabinet about the imponderables? I gave up the idea; I realize to-day that this was a great mistake.

Two sentences of Simons' draft to which I attached particular value had been left. One of them expressed our confident hope that no condition would be put which would be incompatible with the honour of our army. The other ran as follows:

> 'In this connection the German Government would remind the President that German non-combatants are to-day suffering under methods of naval warfare which are in conflict both with the President's principle of the Freedom of the Seas and with the international law which has hitherto obtained.'

This attack on the hunger war was necessary to counteract the confession of guilt which—according to Wilson's plan—the abandonment of the submarine warfare was intended to imply, the good name of the navy was thus not left undefended, and the concession was made more palatable to our sense of honour.

At 12 o'clock I was to be in the Federal Council, there to explain and defend the note. I had just had time to open the session when I was called away; Herr von Plessen had arrived with instructions from the Kaiser, bringing me an important message. He informed me that His Majesty shared the opinion of the navy and intended to summon a Crown Council at Potsdam for the afternoon, should the Chancellor persist in his view. I replied to the general that it was physically impossible for me to attend this Crown Council in the afternoon, for which meetings had been arranged

which could not be delayed. I therefore begged His Majesty to be graciously pleased to come to Berlin and receive my report. I should not give up my standpoint. Without the abandonment of the submarine warfare, Wilson would break off negotiations; and German public opinion would not allow this particular obstacle to wreck the prospects of peace. I should feel myself compelled to resign my office, if His Majesty took the side of the navy. 'It gives me no pleasure to have to say so,' I concluded, 'but I am perfectly clear that if I go, the Cabinet will fall to pieces, and then comes the revolution.' Herr von Plessen asked me: 'Shall I repeat this to His Majesty?' I answered: 'Yes, that is my wish.'

After that I did not return to the Federal Council session. In the luncheon interval I was told by the Bavarian Minister, Count Lerchenfeld, that Solf had informed the committee of the conflict which was in progress and found the overwhelming majority of the Councillors on the side of the Government. One point in the note was criticized. Dandl wanted the concession in the submarine question to be more plainly expressed. Further they recommended the abolition of the Military Cabinet, or at least the putting of it on a constitutional basis—this if possible to be done *pari passu* with our answer. Dandl concluded the session with the words: 'The Supreme Command has not only to think of itself, it has also to consider the Kaiser.'

Count Lerchenfeld told me of the passionate longing for peace in Bavaria. What he said tallied completely with the information which we had received from the Prussian Minister in Munich, Herr von Treutler.

'MUNICH,
20th October, 1918.[1]

I think it my duty to warn you against drawing conclusions as to the real popular feeling from the resolute tone of almost the whole Press. In fact the overwhelming majority wants peace and nothing but peace.

TREUTLER.'

A letter which reached me just then from Crown Prince

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 66.

Rupprecht made me quite certain that General Ludendorff had not had the army behind him either when he wrote that he ' looked on a breaking-off of negotiations with equanimity.'

On 18th October Crown Prince Rupprecht thus described the military situation :

' Perhaps it may interest you to hear something about the military aspect of the situation. Our troops are exhausted and their numbers have dwindled terribly. The number of infantry in an Active Service division is seldom as much as 3000. In general the infantry of a division can be treated as equivalent to one or two battalions, and in certain cases as only equivalent to two or three companies. Quantities of machine-guns have been lost, and there is a lack of trained machine-gun teams. The artillery has also lost a great number of guns and suffers from a lack of trained gun-layers. In certain armies fifty per cent. of the guns are without horses ! There is also a lack of ammunition, and particularly for the most important kind of guns, such as the 16 cm. field guns, the light field howitzers and the 10 cm. guns, which can no longer be adequately kept supplied from home. Regular officers are now only to be found occasionally in the higher staffs, apart from the Regimental Commanders.

The morale of the troops has suffered seriously and their power of resistance diminishes daily. They surrender in hordes, whenever the enemy attacks, and thousands of plunderers infest the districts round the bases. We have no more prepared lines, and no more can be dug. There is a shortage of fuel for the lorries, and when the Austrians desert us, and we get no more petrol from Rumania, two months will put a stop to our aviation. I do not expect much from a *levée en masse*, on the model of Carnot's at the beginning of the French revolutionary wars ; it meant much then, because it was put into force at the beginning of a war, but we are already in the fifth year of the war, and our reserves in men are already exhausted to breaking point. Further, how are the war industries to carry on in face of a *levée en masse*, when they are not even now in a position to fulfil completely the demands which we make on them ?

We cannot sustain a serious enemy attack, owing to a lack of all reserves. If we succeed, by retreating behind the serious obstacle of the Meuse, in shortening our front considerably, we can hold out there under favourable circumstances for one or two months, but only if the enemy does not violate Holland's

neutrality or drive it to take sides against us and if the Austro-Hungarian troops are not withdrawn from the Western front.

I should like to add that in every fresh retreat we always have to leave a good deal of material behind.

I do not believe that there is any possibility of holding out over December, particularly as the Americans are drawing about 300,000 men monthly from beyond the ocean. I should like to add that our situation is already exceedingly dangerous, and that under certain circumstances a catastrophe can occur overnight.

Ludendorff does not realize the whole seriousness of the situation. Whatever happens, we must obtain peace, before the enemy breaks through into Germany; if he does, woe on us!'

'19*th October*, 1918.

Reports which reached me yesterday evening put the numbers of the infantry considerably lower still than I supposed. The divisions each amount to 3000 head of infantry, exclusive of the small reinforcements which have not yet been brought up, and of the untrained recruits, (perhaps 1100 per division). Among these, however, are many garrison service men, so that when these and the sick and the otherwise indispensable are deducted, the divisions can only go into battle with an average strength of a thousand rifles, against 12,000 at the beginning of the war.

I should also like to mention, that when we go behind the Meuse, the Rhenish-Westfalian and the Lothringian industrial districts will be exposed in an increasing degree to attacks from the air.'

Early in the afternoon the Kaiser came. Count Lerchenfeld was still with me. I asked him, as representative of Bavaria and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, to be present at our conversation; I knew, too, that the Count enjoyed the respect and the regard of the Kaiser. His Majesty was irritated by the presence of Count Lerchenfeld and greeted him with the words: 'I was not aware that you were an expert on naval affairs!' Then he expressed himself against the abandonment of the intensified submarine war. We each developed the reasons on which we based our views, and I added that I was obliged to make my remaining depend on the assent of the Kaiser to the concession which I regarded

as necessary. Most unwillingly the Kaiser gave his consent. Then Count Lerchenfeld mentioned the dangerous currents of opinion in the Empire, which had begun to take a particular turn against the Kaiser. His Majesty interrupted him, saying that he was well aware of this, that he well knew, too, that many were demanding his abdication, but, he added emphatically, 'a Successor of Frederick the Great does not abdicate.' Whereupon he left us and at once received the head of the Naval Staff, to whom he communicated his decision.

I stayed away at first from the afternoon meeting of the Cabinet till Wahnschaffe appeared and informed me that the Ministers had heard of my action and were in a considerable state of excitement; they demanded to see me. I was able to quiet them by explaining how the conflict had to be brought to a speedy decision, and how I had wanted to act on my own responsibility, so as not to drag my colleagues into resignation with me, if resignation should really be necessary. Payer thanked me for the step I had undertaken with the Kaiser. I, for my part, regarded the affair as closed through the decision of His Majesty. I did not doubt that General Ludendorff would obey. But the Ministers demanded that the Supreme Command should yield, and wanted to extort its surrender at any price, before the note, 'which would otherwise become a cause of dissension in every party,' went out into the world. Haeften declared that he had exhausted all his arguments; General Ludendorff believed, he said, that the time had come to break with Wilson. The War Minister then received instructions to undertake one more attempt at convincing him. He came back after half an hour on the telephone, without having at any point brought him to reason. He had kept putting the alternative before the General: 'If you want to negotiate, give up the intensified submarine war; if you want to carry on this war, then break off the negotiations.' The General refused to believe that it had to be 'Either-Or.'

Scheüch remarked to Haeften: 'I don't envy you having to fight out these disputes on the telephone every day!'

The Supreme Command stuck to its opinion, but the War Minister succeeded in making clear to them that the sending-off of the note must be pushed on, in view of the big scale operations which were expected.

Late in the evening I had one more unpleasant surprise. Simons informed me in a great state of excitement that Solf had not been able to defend the two sentences on which I set such store, against the objections newly raised by some of the ministers ; and so the note would go off *without* the protest against dishonourable conditions and against the starvation blockade. My indignation was great, and I at once wrote Solf a very bitter letter, which reached him just before midnight, with the result that our note which was sent out at 12.20 a.m., at least contained the 'Honour Clause' once more.

I sought to explain the change of front on the part of my colleagues. Pessimism among the public had made rapid strides since 18th October. The fall of Lille, Ostend and Douai was felt by the population as were also Turkey's separate negotiations with the enemy. At the same time Wilson's note to Austria of the 16th October became known, in which he empowered Jugoslavs and Czechoslovaks to dissolve the Danube monarchy. The Parliamentary Ministers were particularly impressed by a meeting of the Inter-Party Committee, in which, while the Cabinet's line of policy was approved, after communications made by Scheidemann and Haussmann, yet on all sides the daily increasing war-weariness was spoken of. Ebert's words were the most impressive :

> 'The people, he said, pointed to Ludendorff as the guilty man ; but all their hate was concentrated on Wilhelm II. The Independents suited their tone to the psychology of the munition-workers ; the masses would not tolerate the war much longer ; but in spite of that we must put up a show of resistance still.'

Our note was subjected by the public to sharp criticism—perhaps more on account of its form than of its contents.

I quote here the final text : [1]

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 64.

'BERLIN, *20th October*, 1918.
Dispatched *21st October*.

In complying with the proposal to evacuate occupied territories the German Government adopted the position that the procedure in this evacuation and the conditions of armistice are to be left to the judgment of military advisers, and that the present relative strength on the fronts must be made the basis of arrangements that will safeguard and guarantee it. The German Government leaves it to the President to create an opportunity to settle the details. It trusts that the President of the United States will approve no demand that would not be compatible with the honour of the German people, nor pave the way to a peace of justice.

The German Government protests against the charge of illegal and inhuman practices that is made against the German land and sea forces, and thereby against the German people.

Demolitions will always be necessary to cover a retreat, and are so far permitted under international law. The German troops have the strictest instructions to respect private property and to make provision for the population according to their ability. Where, notwithstanding this, excesses occur, the guilty are punished.

The German Government also denies that in sinking ships the German Navy has purposely destroyed lifeboats together with their occupants. The German Government suggests that in all these points the facts shall be cleared up by neutral commissions.

In order to avoid everything that might impede the efforts to secure peace, orders have, at the direction of the German Government, been sent out to all submarine commanders that will exclude the torpedoing of passenger ships. At the same time, however, for technical reasons, no guarantee can be undertaken that this order will reach every submarine at sea before its return.

President Wilson describes as a fundamental condition for peace the removal of every arbitrary power that can separately, uncontrolled, and of its own single choice disturb the peace of the world. To this the German Government replies: In the German Empire the representatives of the people have hitherto had no right to influence the formation of the Government. The Constitution did not provide for the co-operation of Parliament in decisions on war and peace. A fundamental change has come about in this regard. The new Government

has been formed in complete accord with the desires of a Parliament which issued from equal, universal, secret and direct suffrage. The leaders of the great parties of the Reichstag are amongst its members.

In the future, too, no Government can enter upon or carry on its office without possessing the confidence of the majority of the Reichstag. The responsibility of the Imperial Chancellor towards Parliament is being legally extended and safeguarded. The first act of the new Government was to submit a bill to the Reichstag so amending the Constitution of the Empire that the approval of Parliament is requisite for a decision on war and peace. The pledge for the duration of the new system, however, does not lie only in legal guarantees, but also in the unshakable will of the German people, the great majority of which is behind these reforms, and demands their energetic prosecution.

The President's question as to whom he and the Governments associated against Germany are dealing with is therefore clearly and unequivocally answered, to the effect that the peace and armistice offer comes from a Government which, free from all arbitrary and irresponsible influence, is supported by the approval of the overwhelming majority of the German people.

SOLF.'

On the morrow of 21st October the storm in the Cabinet broke out afresh. Solf at the beginning of the meeting had expressed Ludendorff's attitude in the words which the General himself had spoken to Haeften during the night: 'From a military point of view His Majesty's order is decisive for me, but over my convictions he has no authority.'

I was prevented by Government business from being present; nor had I any more interest in a conflict which lacked all real importance and now was to have a sequel which stands in curious contrast to the tragic situation of the country. The Ministers insisted on arguing further with General Ludendorff. Haeften was to make a fresh demand, in the form of an Ultimatum, that the Supreme Command should now give its assent to the note which had in the meantime been sent off. He was in despair when he left the Cabinet Meeting, convinced as he was of the senselessness and uselessness of the instructions which he had been given.

In the ante-room he met Hahn and told him about the new crisis. Hahn explained to his former chief that the Ministers were simply proclaiming, *urbi et orbi*, that they were now masters in their own house. One must remind them of this fact and make it clear to them that there could be no greater proof of their power than for General Ludendorff to have to give way even when he was not convinced. This idea struck Haeften, he hurried back to the conference room, where he took the most officious of the Ministers, Herr Erzberger, into a corner and explained to him that now political power was concentrated in the hands of the Government, and the Supreme Command was no longer a power in politics. There was no reason why the Supreme Command and the Government should always be of the same opinion ; what mattered was that the Government should always get its own way. The scales fell from Erzberger's eyes : ' There I think you are quite right ; it can only be good for the world to know that we are really and truly masters in our own house ! ' and he quickly resolved to seize the opportunity of being the man to allay the crisis. He fetched Scheidemann over and conversed with him for a quarter of an hour. Then he asked to be allowed to speak, and made an impassioned speech ; he said it would damage the prestige of the whole Cabinet, if it was known to have required the enforced consent of the Supreme Command to cover its actions. Scheidemann seconded him. The Cabinet was won over and passed a resolution that the Supreme Command was to declare itself to be without influence on politics. Haeften rushed to the telephone and succeeded in getting General Ludendorff to agree to the following declaration : [1]

1. The Supreme Command does not regard itself as being a power in politics, it is therefore without political responsibility. Its political assent to the note is therefore unnecessary.

Should the question be raised by the public—whether in the Reichstag or in the Press—as to the attitude of the Supreme Command, the Government is empowered to issue a declaration in the above sense.

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 66 B.

2. The Supreme Command will act in the matter in a spirit of complete loyalty to the Government; it will do everything to avoid steps likely to make difficulties for the Government in defending the note before the public.

3. The Supreme Command is unable to make the declaration desired by the Imperial Government to the effect that the Supreme Command, while maintaining its military point of view, yet recognizes that concession upon the submarine question is necessary to obtain the desired *political* success of the note; it has no material at its disposal, such as would be necessary to arrive at an opinion on the *political* aspect of the question; and thus is not in a position to express any such opinion.

VON HAEFTEN,
Colonel.[1]

[1] Colonel von Haeften added to the document in question the following note: 'The above Declaration was communicated by me to General Ludendorff on 21st October, 12,30 p.m., by telephone. He expressed his agreement with it.'

CHAPTER VII

THE REICHSTAG SESSIONS OF 22ND-24TH OCTOBER, 1918

On 21st October the Ministers were received by the Kaiser at Schloss Bellevue. I presented them individually; there was probably no one of them who remained unaffected by the natural graciousness of his personality. In an impressive tone he read the following Address:

'Gentlemen! I bid you welcome to your new offices, to which the confidence of the people has called you. In My decree of 30th September, upon which your appointment was based, I took the decisive step which was to lead the German people into a new phase of its constitutional life. In the fearful storms of the world war, we have been put before the task of securing the inner structure of the Empire upon a new and broader foundation. The shocks of the war have led us to recognize where the pillars of the house that shelters us all have grown weak from age, and where they require renewal. But they have also brought to light the fresh springs of power, which are welling up among our people. The impressions of the first days of war are ineffaceable in My memory, and have only taken deeper root in these years of conflict. Our people has shown a greatness which is truly sublime, defending itself against a superiority which continually grew more overpowering, working under conditions which kept growing harder, suffering under a want which grew ever more severe. A people which has fought so heroically and which has developed such superhuman powers, will be held in honour for all time. All this is deeply engraved upon My heart, as I once more solemnly affirm to-day.

In a series of Proclamations I have expressed My determination that the new times shall give birth to the new order which they demand. The German people is to be invited to take part in an extensive measure of co-operation for the working-out of its own destinies—our people, which is inferior to none in the political freedom it enjoys and which can stand comparison with any other for native ability and stalwart patriotism.

You, gentlemen, have the task of helping to lead Germany into the new era. I know well that there is not one among you, who is not conscious of the greatness of this task and of his tremendous responsibility. But I, for My part, feel myself impelled to assure you at this hour of my firm determination to do everything that lies in My power, with your help and with the co-operation of the popular representatives, to attain the aims set out in my Decree of 30th September. Gentlemen, I feel myself at one with you, whom I greet to-day for the first time as my collaborators in the sacred task of bringing the German Empire out of this troublous time into a secure and peaceable phase of development. I hope that thus united by the bonds of a glowing patriotism and of a strong sense of responsibility we shall succeed in paving the way to a bright and prosperous future for the new Germany. For this we will strain every nerve, ready to follow the path of peace, and ready, too, to fight to the last gasp, if the enemy demands it.'

At the discussion of the address in the afternoon meeting of the Cabinet, Haussmann remarked : ' If only this speech had been made three months ago ! ' The question was debated whether publication was advisable ; opinions differed on the point.

I was not in favour ; I knew too well how bitterly the Kaiser regretted having to suffer this diminution of his prerogatives, which the critical situation of the country had extorted from him. And was he now before the public to have to admit his adherence to the new system and express his willingness to co-operate with the new men ? That was beneath his dignity—but in the last resort, it was for him to decide whether he could override this objection or not ; I should have been only too pleased for the Kaiser to have his enjoyment of a ' good press,' with which his speech would certainly be received. One consideration was decisive for me—the less said of the Kaiser the better. At this moment I did not want to have any discussion of his proclamations. In spite of all the warnings which reached me from abroad, I still reckoned with the possibility of Wilson's not putting the German people before the question of abdication. I held firmly to this hope, presumably from a vague feeling that should Wilson demand the abdica-

tion, the Cabinet, and in its turn the nation, would break up. And I thought that the more the Kaiser effaced himself from public view, the less we should give the enemy occasion to concern themselves with his person.

I did not let myself be misled by the following telegram from His Majesty :

'New Palace,
21*st October*, 1918.

To Chancellor, Berlin,

I hear that it is the wish of the gentlemen who were presented to Me, that it (the text of My address) should be published. I cannot but accede to this request. It will give you and them a good starting-point for to-morrow, and will be a warning to the people that it is I who stand at the head of the new Government ; this should at once nip in the bud much of the idle talk and intrigue which has been directed even against My Person, and should bring over to Our side those who are ill-disposed or lukewarm.

WILHELM, I.R.'

The Reichstag was summoned for 22nd October. I intended to dwell upon the power for reconciliation which a just peace would have, but at the same time to damp down the hopes of peace and prepare the people for National Defence.

Apart from that I had to announce the bills for amending the constitution, which we had prepared or were still working upon.

1. The draft clause with regard to the position of Ministers who were at the same time Members of the Reichstag [1]—the amendment of Article 21, the second clause of which was to be cancelled,[2] and a re-formulation of the Chancellor's Deputies Law.[3]

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 30 f.

[2] Art. 21, par. 2 : 'If a member of the Reichstag accepts a salaried Imperial Office or a salaried Office of State in one of the Federal States, or takes up an Appointment of higher rank or higher salary, either in the Imperial Service or in any State Service, he shall lose his seat and vote in the Reichstag and can regain his position therein only through re-election.'

[3] According to the new formulation, all the Chancellor's deputies, including Secretaries of State without Portfolio, could claim the right to speak in the Reichstag at any time, even without being members of the Federal Council.

2. An amendment of Article 11, which should make a declaration of war dependent not merely on the consent of the Federal Council, as formerly, but also on that of the Reichstag.[1]

Our draft contained here the reservation : ' Except where an attack shall have resulted against the territory or the coast of the Federation ; ' but we had agreed that the parties should propose the cancelling of the sub-clause in question. This concession was to deprive Wilson of any pretext for telling an uninstructed people that the Kaiser would always be able to make out an attack had taken place and thus to declare war by eliminating the Reichstag. We felt we could drop this reservation, because in any serious case there would be no delay in taking the necessary defensive steps.[2] I had been convinced by Scheidemann's remark, made in the course of the discussion : ' If things are really serious, the people will save their own skins.'

We planned further to secure the rights and duties of the Imperial Chancellor otherwise than the Constitution had hitherto done—to define his responsibility to Reichstag and Federal Council and to extend it to cover all political acts of the Kaiser ; also to make the appointment of officers of the Navy dependent on the counter-signature of the Chancellor and that of officers of the Army upon the counter-signature of the War Minister of the respective State Contingent, the War Ministers themselves to be answerable for their administration to the Reichstag and to the Federal Council.

The Cabinet felt the greatest anxiety for the coming session. The Independents, Alsatians and Poles were determined to announce to the world that they feared the power of Germany no longer.

[1] Article 11 : ' For a declaration of war in the name of the Empire, the consent of the Federal Council (add : " and of the Reichstag ") is necessary. Treaties of Peace, and treaties with foreign powers concerning matters which may be object of Imperial legislation, require the consent of the Federal Council (add : " and of the Reichstag ").'

[2] The declaration of a ' State of Imminent Danger of War ' was not to require the consent of the Reichstag.

The Independents wanted to mobilize the workmen against any scheme of National Defence.

Scheidemann was very anxious as to the figure which the Government Socialists would cut before the masses after this attack of the Independents. He had declared that unless Liebknecht were pardoned he would be unable to face the storm. Liebknecht was for them the great martyr who had from the beginning demanded peace and armistice. The Minister persisted in his assertion that Liebknecht would be more dangerous in prison than out of it. At that time I trusted to Scheidemann's feeling for the temper of the workmen, and regarded it of vital importance for the Majority Socialists to maintain their hold on the Trades Unions. I, therefore, ordered the release of Liebnecht in the teeth of the President of the Supreme Court-Martial and of the War Minister.

The Alsatians were going to refuse Home Rule.

Had it not been for the armistice offer, Alsace would have gladly accepted the status of a Federal State on an equal footing with the rest, even at the beginning of October. But this declaration of our impotence, coupled with our unreserved acceptance of the Eighth of Wilson's Points,[1] naturally turned the eyes of the Alsatians towards France—though rather out of anxiety than out of sympathy. Many an old German family had sold its landed property directly after 5th October, and had retired with its effects for safety into Germany. Business men were ordering their words and actions so as to be able later to do business in France. The territory of Alsace had been a military base. This fact compelled the authorities to be suspicious towards the population ; thus out of the inevitable hardship of war had grown in the course of years a regime of intolerable oppression. Now, at last, their hate of the German military government dared to raise its head, and prevailed over the natural economic considerations, which demanded union with Germany. It was clear that the majority of the population was no longer for remaining with Germany. If put before the simple

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 26 n.

alternative of ' France or Germany,' Alsace-Lorraine would at the moment decide for France. But the phrase ' self-determination of the people ' had awakened in the ' Imperial Territory,' too, the desire for independence, and was for us the only hope of avoiding annexation by France. The newly appointed governor, Schwander, a loyal Alsatian and a loyal German, stated in a considered report that at the plebiscite the majority of votes would declare for an independent neutral state, from the general desire to be no longer the apple of discord between two nations. He advised us to encourage the movement for neutralization ; ' its success,' he said, ' is, in view of the changes which are to be feared, far and away the lesser evil, both from the point of view of the prestige and of the economic interests of the Empire, and also for preserving the peculiar character of the people.' [1]

Ever since the day the offer was made I had reckoned with Alsace-Lorraine being lost to the Empire.[2] To-morrow the Alsatian and Lorrainer deputies would say that openly—that was the terrible thing.

The Poles wanted to put in a public claim to Posen, Danzig and Upper Silesia.

About this time the ' activist ' Government in Warsaw fell ; it was the second Government to be formed since my taking office. The bitter Germanophobe Glombinsky became Minister of Foreign Affairs, General Pilsudsky, still a prisoner in Germany, became Minister of War ; the German Poles, Korfanty and Seyda, became Ministerial Commissioners for the territories to be won from Germany.

There is no point in mentioning in this connection the mistakes of Germany's policy towards Poland. Even had we always recognized the right of the Polish-speaking Germans to a cultural life of their own, and had we never introduced the unhappy Confiscation Law—even had the vexations of the bureaucracy that administered occupied Poland been avoided, our submission to Wilson's Thirteenth Condition [3]

[1] Schwander's report of 26th October, 1918, the matter of which was already known to me.

[2] *Vide supra*, pp. 8 and 21.

[3] *Vide supra*, p. 24 n.

must have opened the flood-gates of Polish nationalism. Against it no feelings of loyalty or gratitude could have been of any avail.

We had but one means of keeping the Polish greed in check, viz., the withdrawal of our troops and railways from the occupied districts, which would have meant the abandonment of these territories to Bolshevism and famine. The Prussian Minister Drews and the Presidents and Sub-Presidents of the threatened Eastern Marches urged us to take this desperate step. The Prussian Government found in Hergt an opponent of the ' brutal ' solution, as he called it. I, too, felt the gravest objections.[1] Apart from this, who could count on being able to stop the triumphal march of Bolshevism at our frontiers ? The negative report of the Governor-General of Poland was decisive ; Herr von Beseler regarded it as probable that the flames would then leap over to Germany. About this time, too, the idea of a German-Polish military convention was ventilated ; it would have had a real basis in our common danger from the East ; the Polish General Staff had approached us with a definite proposal. But it was obviously out of touch with public opinion, which at that time was controlled by the National Democrats. Since 5th October the Polish parties took their instructions from the Entente.

To the Congress of the Slavs in Paris, only the Poles of Galicia had been invited ; the ' Warsaw ' Poles were excluded as a punishment for their co-operation with the Germans. They now had to make this good ; and in consequence the shamelessness of the Polish Press grew with every new note of Wilson's.

It was therefore to be expected that Korfanty and Seyda too would do all they could in the Reichstag to prove themselves fit allies of the Entente.

Taught by experience, I did not previously discuss my

[1] I have always regarded the deliberate infection of enemy countries with revolutionary poison as a highly objectionable measure from the point of view of political morality. I particularly disapproved of the dispatch of Lenin in the sealed carriage to Russia.

speech in the Cabinet. I give it here in the form in which I delivered it on 22nd October :

' Gentlemen,

Since the first occasion on which I spoke to you, further steps have been taken on both sides in pursuance of the peace action which the Government took in hand on entering office.

First came President Wilson's counter-question. Our unequivocal answer in the affirmative led to a fresh inquiry from the President. Our answer to this was published yesterday.

Gentlemen, the whole German people is waiting to hear, what in the opinion of the Government are the prospects of this effort for peace succeeding. You will understand that I can only express myself on this point with the greatest reserve. I know that the parties also share my desire to keep the debate within the limits imposed by the gravity of the moment. President Wilson has spoken to the German people. This fact gives an added weight to the utterances of the representatives of all parties.

I should therefore like to say simply this with regard to the international situation :

The President's first answer to the peace step of the German Government has in all countries intensified the conflict of opinion on the question of a Peace of Justice or a Peace of Violence. This is the conflict which is being fought out publicly in every single country, exactly as it would have had to be fought out among us, had we been in a similar situation.

On the one side is to be heard louder than ever the voice of those who imagine the moment to be almost come in which they will be able to satiate all their pent-up passions of hate and revenge upon the soil of our German Fatherland. On the other side the sincere supporters of the League of Nations are fully aware that the fundamental idea of their new faith is to-day being put to the decisive test. This fundamental idea asserts that before any single power or group of powers undertake to apply physical compulsion to the enforcing of their claims against another nation, a thorough and sincere attempt must be made by way of agreement, to maintain peace,—or, adapting the principle to the present international situation—to attain it.

This conflict of opinion is still undecided. We can name the spiritual forces which are ranged against each other, but we cannot estimate their respective strength.

The last note of President Wilson has brought no enlighten-

ment to the German people as to the issue in this struggle of opinion. Perhaps the next answer of the President will bring such final certainty.

Gentlemen, till then our every word and action must show that we are prepared for both possibilities :

First, in case the enemy Governments desire war, we have no other choice but to defend ourselves, to rally the whole forces of a people driven to uttermost desperation. Should such necessity arise, I have no doubt that the German Government will be able in the name of the German people to summon it to National Defence, just as it was able to speak in the name of the German people when it took the first active step towards peace.

Anyone who has sincerely taken up his stand for a peace of justice, has at the same time undertaken the duty of not yielding without a struggle to a peace of violence. A Government that was insensible to such considerations would be treated with deserved contempt by soldiers and workers alike ; an indignant public opinion would soon sweep it from power.

But, gentlemen, we must to-day face the second possibility also with all that it implies. The German people must not be led blindfold to the conference table. The nation has to-day the right to ask what a peace on the basis of Wilson's conditions —should such be realized—would mean for its continued existence and for its future ? Our answer to President Wilson's questions has—to judge from the echoes which it called forth among the public—made the German people realize for the first time what is at stake. Now it expects clear information.

Gentlemen, it is a decision which entails the most far-reaching consequences for our position in the world. We have undertaken to be guided no longer by what we ourselves happen to think fit, but by what as the result of frank conference with our enemies is recognized to be just. This is a hard trial for a proud people, accustomed to victory ! For the march of Justice cannot be stayed at our frontiers, though we should never voluntarily open them to mere force ; the principles which we have recognized as binding upon us, raise problems within the Empire too.

Gentlemen, from many quarters the objection has been made, that the acceptance of Wilson's conditions will mean Germany's submitting to a hostile tribunal which will judge of questions of justice exclusively from the point of view of their own interests. If that is the case, why do the extreme advocates of force among the Entente fight shy of the conference table,

as the guilty man does of the Court of Law? The kernel of Wilson's programme is the League of Nations, and its realization depends on a national self-conquest on the part of every single nation. The realization of a just community of nations demands the abandonment of some part of that unlimited independence which up to now was the mark of sovereignty—by us and by the others.

The spirit in which we accept this necessary development will be decisive for our whole future. If in our inmost hearts we maintain the principle of national selfishness, which till a short while ago was the dominating force in the life of the peoples, then, gentlemen, we cannot look forward to any recovery or revival. There will remain then a feeling of bitterness, which will lame us for generations. But if we have once realized that the meaning of this fearful war is above all the triumph of the idea of justice, and if we pledge ourselves to this idea not reluctantly, not with any inner reservations, but of our own entire free will, we shall find in it a medicine for the wounds of the present and a task for the forces of the future. The German people is ready to work at this task with all the power of objectivity, all the earnestness and conscientiousness which are our peculiar heritage.

Gentlemen, we only need to go back two generations to re-discover the moral energies which are necessary for the new development. But if we once make these aims of humanity our own, then the co-operation of the nations will become for us a great and satisfying task. I should like here to quote my words of 15th February:[1]

> "The mere idea of 'the struggle for our existence,' taken by itself, leaves great human sources of strength untapped. To secure the happiness and the rights of other peoples must become one of the objects of our national will."

While I thus to-day commend to our people in this dark hour the idea of the League of Nations as a source of consolation and of renewed strength, I will not, for a moment, attempt to conceal the tremendous obstacles that must be overcome, before this idea can become reality. No one can say whether this will come to pass later or sooner.

Whether the next few days or weeks call us to continue the struggle or whether they open to us a way of peace, of one thing there can be no doubt, that we shall only be equal to these tasks, whether of peace or of war, if we carry through the

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 240. This is not a word-for-word quotation.

Government programme and make a decisive break with the old system.

This brings me, gentlemen, to the questions of internal policy, upon which an account is due to the representatives of the German people. Gentlemen, I outlined to you on 5th October the general principles which were to guide me in my office of Chancellor, and in this connection declared my attitude to the programme of the Majority Parties, whose confidence allowed me to take office. Guided by these principles, my colleagues and I have taken steps to establish within Germany conditions of political freedom. I shall now give some account of what these steps have been. The reform of the suffrage in Prussia has, through a laudable spirit of conciliation shown by the parties towards the proposals of the Government, so far advanced that the introduction of the universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage in Prussia is assured.

Two draft bills have been laid before the Reichstag which are to free the new type of Government we have introduced from the constitutional obstacles which stand in its way.

The first of these drafts is to make it possible for the members of this House to enter the Government without losing their seat in the Reichstag. This is indispensable, if there is to be the close co-operation between Parliament and the heads of the administration which their common work and their mutual confidence demand.

The draft further proposes an amendment of the Law of the Chancellor's Deputies. Up to now the heads of Departments of the Imperial Administration could be Deputies of the Chancellor, in the future members of the Reichstag are to take their part in framing Imperial policy and are to be able to answer for this in the name of the Chancellor, without necessarily having taken over a Department. Thus a new way is open to the man who aspires to responsible administration of the affairs of the Empire—the way that leads through Parliament. We are convinced that it will prove a channel for bringing valuable talent, which up to now lay fallow, into the Government and also indirectly into Parliament. And it will not prevent the born leaders in the other liberal professions from rising to the top.

In this connection is to be mentioned the preliminary work upon the legal consolidation of the Chancellor's political responsibility, which is to be secured through the creation of a

Supreme Court.[1] It might indeed be doubted whether it is necessary to reinforce the Chancellor's sense of responsibility by the creation of such a Supreme Court, since no Chancellor or Secretary of State can remain in office if once he has lost the confidence of the majority of this House. I, however, regard it as desirable, that the political re-organization of the forms of government in Germany should be endorsed and reinforced in this way by an institution of the Public Law. I therefore hope soon to be able to lay the results of the preliminary work before the Reichstag.

From the new system of Imperial Government a new form of government in the "Imperial Territories" has naturally resulted. An Alsatian has taken over the post of Governor of Alsace-Lorraine. An Alsatian has been appointed his Secretary of State. Further, leading men from the Lower House of the Landtag are to take office in the government of these territories. I assume that the new Governor will frame and publish a programme for his Government in consultation with the party leaders.

Gentlemen, the second Bill, which has as its object the amendment of Article 11 of the Imperial Constitution, gives effect to the fundamental idea of the new form of government in the most convincing way. It lays down that the Reichstag, as official organ of the popular representation, is to have a full share in the determination of the most important questions which are vital to the whole nation—of the question of war and peace. Herein lies a guarantee for the peaceful development of the Empire in its relations to other powers. This guarantee would be strengthened by extending the new regulation to cover treaties of alliance also. The German Government would be happy to further such extension of popular rights, when the League of Nations has become a fact. As long as there is no world-wide law on this point, any one-sided obligation through our own internal law would put Germany at a disadvantage as against other nations; but when once the League of Nations has abolished all secret and special alliances and all confidential agreements between Governments, then Article 11 may be extended in this direction too.

The war has in all countries entailed oppressive restrictions upon the freedom of the individual. Peace alone can bring the full restoration of this freedom. We cannot yet dispense with the emergency powers of war-time; but from now on such

[1] Staatsgerichtshof [Tr.].

powers will only be exercised with the consent of the Chancellor, who is responsible to the Reichstag for the way in which they are exercised. Unnecessary hardships should thus be avoided.

The Orders in Council of His Majesty the Emperor, which I foreshadowed on 5th October, have meanwhile been issued. They not only include measures connected with the censorship, with the rights of incorporation and assembly, and with the restriction of individual freedom, but they also deal with the whole activity of the executive power in the field of economic and social life. In the case of disagreement between local commanding officers and the civil authorities, appeal is at once to be made to the Commander-in-Chief at Home, and he cannot take any decision or issue any order, which has not received my assent or the assent of my Deputy. My Deputy is Herr Groeber (Secretary of State without Portfolio). Apart from this the Commander-in-Chief has been given the right to lay down such general principles with my consent, as may secure the execution of the state of siege in accordance with the spirit in which I took over the administration, and in which I am firmly resolved to carry it on.

My programme of 5th October included also an amnesty for persons who had been condemned for political crimes or offences especially in connection with cessation of work, open-air demonstrations and the like. A comprehensive amnesty of this kind has been proposed to the Kaiser and to all the Federal Governments, and is being put into execution. Already a large number of the condemned have regained their freedom. In the case of many, the Government had to overcome the gravest patriotic doubts before it resolved to request pardon for them. Our belief in the healing power of a policy of trust was decisive.

Every step on the new path which I have here described to you, has received the unanimous assent of all the recognized authorities ; they have thus definitely accepted the form of government which I and my colleagues represent. If you, too, gentlemen, give your assent to the Bills which are on the agenda for the day—and I have no doubt that you will—then the regime of popular government will be firmly anchored in imperial law.

Gentlemen, I am well aware, that a retrospect over the results on home policy of these three memorable weeks of October gives rise in you to very mixed feelings. One will see in it a reckless career downhill towards the utter overthrow of

the existing order, another an uncertain hesitant groping after new constitutional forms. Both of these views ought to find their expression, for that is the duty and privilege of an Opposition, such as we need to secure the independence of Parliament. He who is free from responsibility can be free in his criticism. I can only counter both these views by stating on behalf of the Government of the Reichstag majority, that my colleagues and I are completely unanimous, both as to aims and as to methods of attaining them. Our aim is the political coming of age of the German people. This is the guiding star which I and my colleagues keep steadfastly in view. While the individual members of the Government originally started from different points of view, they all now show the same loyalty in following out the common purpose, and thus their paths have drawn ever closer to one another.

The German people has long been sitting in the saddle, it is time it began to ride. Our people has long possessed rights which have been an object of envy to many a politically maturer neighbour. German local self-government was in more than one respect a model of excellence. The Reichstag suffrage was, for a long time, the most liberal suffrage in the world, and this popularly-elected Reichstag had always the important political weapon of the Budget Vote in its hand. But the German people made no use of its power at the points where it might have been decisive.

A man does not become a master in the art of fiddling simply by being presented with a master's fiddle ; he must be ready to let practice show what he is capable of. The German people never attempted to get the most out of its instrument ; it preferred to allow the efficiency of the competent authorities full play. Its power showed itself chiefly in great individual performances in fields other than the political. It was not the arbitrary action of the authorities, but the want of a will to political power on the part of the people, which in Germany kept paternal government alive so long. Since July 1917 the determination to secure political responsibility has been budding—now at the end of September it has burst into flower, and all things are made new. And this, gentlemen, is the guarantee for the further existence and development of the new system. It came into being as the result of a decisive phase of growth in the character of the German people, a phase rendered inevitable by its exertions, its heroic deeds and sacrifices in this war. This fact is in truth a better guarantee of endurance than any number of clauses on the statute-book ; it is in this fact

that I see the roots of the new Government's power. It is this that lays down for me a definite line of march which my whole policy is to pursue ; we must not, to please foreigners or even to ride the storm of the moment, have recourse to forms of government which do not carry our innermost conviction nor give expression to our national individuality and our history.

If we did this, we should be guilty of insincerity and should deprive the new system, which is now being tried for the first time, of that character of irrevocability, which it ought to have.

It was to us too that Fichte addressed his tremendous challenge in the dark days of the German people : " Every people has a task which it, above all others, is required to perform ; keep yourselves as a people for all those tasks in the world that you alone are capable of fulfilling." In the depths of our people there are buried treasures, which only the new freedom can bring to light. Those hours in the life of the German nation, in which it appeared to have been beaten to the ground, have always been pregnant with new spiritual power.

But for the peaceful development of our own individuality we must be able to secure our home from violation. The enemy is at our gates. The brave men who defend them against overwhelming numbers must have the first and last place in our thoughts, and we must defend them against unjust accusations. We must not let it be supposed that it is possible to slander our army, without wounding the honour of the whole people. In every army there have always been individual wrong acts and orders, but these are condemned by the steadfast will of a people in arms. The words that I once spoke, to the effect that the spirit of the Red Cross was as necessary to any proper army as the fighting spirit, received overwhelming assent, in particular from army circles, and confirmation from Christian soldiers in enemy countries who had fought against us Germans.

Gentlemen, our soldiers are placed to-day before a terrible task. They are anxious for the home country, they are thinking upon peace and still they fight on and hold out. We thank them, we trust them, we here call to them : " Your country will not leave you in the lurch ! Whatever you need and it can provide—men, material and morale—that you shall get ! " '

The representatives of the majority spoke first ; they supported me, as I had expected. Only Ebert chose to express his entire lack of satisfaction with the reforms which

had already been accomplished—in the obvious desire to play before the masses the part of the pushing Labour Leader. He demanded the release of the sailors who in 1917 had been sentenced for mutiny, protested against the severe sentences which were being pronounced against Socialists in Finland and Lithuania, and threatened the Pan-Germans, who were agitating against the Government, with an Extraordinary Popular Tribunal. He certainly struck the patriotic note, which came natural to him, and confessed himself ready for National Defence 'to-day as on 4th August, 1914,' but he concluded his speech with words which were perilously encouraging to the boundless longing of the people for peace :

> '*If we have our way, there shall be no "struggle of desperation" . . . The first Imperial German Government of which the Social Democrats are members, must be a Peace Government.*
>
> . . . . Whatever comes, we remain in the middle of Europe a numerous, capable and honour-loving people. . . . If the enemy treats us "as the scum of humanity and as slaves in their debt," we will reply to them : "*Take care, every slavery has its end. . . . We believe in humanity, and even if we are deceived, we shall not despair since we believe in our people too. We shall stand by it loyally then, till the hour of freedom strikes.*"'

This was a dangerous consolation ; to speak of it at such a time must inevitably sap our last springs of resolution.

Stresemann took up a decisive stand on the side of the Government and specially emphasized the importance of co-operation with the Social Democrats :

> '*Had Bismarck ever been able to dispose of a great and powerful Labour Party prepared to take office and political responsibility, he would have been the first to make use of these forces to help him in realizing his aims. . . . We are and remain Monarchists, and for this reason are convinced that by energetic co-operation to realize this new order we are at the same time doing the best possible thing to preserve the Monarchy.*'

Westarp followed Stresemann. He spoke with the reserve which his previous political activity during the war forced upon him. He attacked the Parliamentary System, but promised to place himself at the disposal of the Government

should it issue a summons to National Defence. Significant was his admission that to-day the voice of the Conservative Party did not carry far enough, ' in consequence of so much agitation ' and ' of the course of political development up to now.' Once he went off the rails. He could not resist the chance of stigmatizing the armistice offer as the first act of the Majority Government, although he was well informed of the true situation in all its details.

This evening I fell ill with influenza ; during the next few days Simons, Wahnschaffe and Haeften kept me informed as to the progress of the debate.

On 23rd October it was the turn of the enemies of the Empire to speak. According to plan they turned up one after the other and proclaimed the termination of their allegiance. ' *We can and will speak openly* '—this was the sort of way in which they began.

The impression is said to have been terrible—' *Finis Germaniae*,' was the report of an eye-witness. One of my colleagues spoke of the Chorus of Jackals ; he quoted :

> ' Old Germany, we are bringing thy hearse,
> And loading upon it a threefold curse.'

First came Haase's speech, full of malicious joy at the irretrievable disaster we had suffered.

> ' *Any further bloodshed is now, even from a military point of view, completely useless, completely senseless.* All round us Republics are being set up,' he exclaimed in scorn, ' Crowns are rolling about the floor . . . and shall Germany alone, surrounded by Republics, still keep up a Crowned Head, or rather a whole lot of Heads all wearing their little crowns and coronets.'

Then came the Pole Stychel. He introduced himself with the words :

> ' We can now lay aside our reserve,' and he celebrated Wilson as the benefactor of humanity and his principles as God-inspired. Already the Pole was thinking of how to get round the plebiscite in the Eastern provinces ; ' the dead would have to be allowed to vote too,' he said. In spite of its partition among the three Empires, Poland has always felt itself to be

unitary organism. The Prussian Principle of the Paramount Interests of State would now take its revenge upon its own initiators.

Ricklin declared that he felt it his ' duty to tell the German people the truth.'

> ' *The question of Alsace-Lorraine*,' *he said*, ' *had reached a stage in which the granting of Autonomy would no longer have any considerable effect on public opinion there.* We received from our constituents instructions to work for Home Rule within the German Federation. . . . These instructions have now become obsolete.'

He concluded with the words :

> ' Had this step . . . been taken sooner, not only would it have spared *us* many evils . . . but would probably have helped to prevent the fearful disasters which this war has brought upon the world.'

In these words rang the *sorrowful* note ' Too late.' The Alsatian did not triumph ; he was dreading the future masters of Alsace-Lorraine—with good reason.

Finally the Dane Hansen gave us a last kick :

> ' *The gravity of the hour demands that I should speak frankly and plainly* . . . as representative of the Danish population of North Schleswig, he demanded, in the name of Law and Justice, the execution of Section 5 of the Treaty of Prague,[1] thus realizing in the coming Treaty of Peace a final solution of the North Schleswig question, on the basis of the self-determination of peoples.'

There was no lack of indignant rejoinder from the Government benches and from the whole Parliament, but Poles and Independents were not to be cowed.

On the next day (24th October) Solf opened the debate. He was dignified and adroit. He not only protested as a German against the coercion of his compatriots, but proved that the Polish claims were in glaring contradiction to President Wilson's principles. He was greeted by storms of applause as he recalled the sacrifices of blood and money which the German army and people had made in this war,

[1] Of 23rd August, 1866.

before it was possible to realize the preliminary conditions upon which freedom for Poland could be based ; but in the midst of the applause Korfanty was heard to cry : ' They have robbed us and plundered us—that is what they have done ! ' This produced lively scenes among the deputies. An interruption from the Right, ' Out with the cur ! ' interpreted the feeling of the galleries.

Then the War Minister, General Scheüch, introduced himself to the Reichstag. Serene and imperturbable as ever, he tried to master the general feeling of despair which was the real source of strength of the Independents.

' Gentlemen, I have for the first time since being appointed Minister of War by His Majesty the Emperor-King the honour of speaking in this capacity before your august assembly. I do so in a dark and difficult time—particularly difficult for a Minister of War. But it is not a desperate time, and it is in our power to prevent it getting desperate—in the power of our army, of our people (lively applause Right), of our whole economic fabric. I here assert in contradiction of Herr Haase's utterance of yesterday and in complete agreement with Herr Westarp's speech, that our army, our people, our industry are in full possession of the forces which can make a prolonged resistance possible (cheers Right and Left—laughter from the Independent Socialists). Your laughter will not diminish these forces in the slightest (storms of applause from the Right) ; it will only help to increase them (renewed cheers Right, Centre and Left—interruption from the Independent Socialists. President rings the bell).

PRESIDENT : Herr Haase, you were allowed yesterday to speak for an hour and a half, now you must let the Minister of War finish his speech.

SCHEÜCH : Gentlemen, my chief task in office will be continually to nurse these forces, to strengthen them and to bring them to the support of our fighting front (" Bravo ! " from Right and Left). And for this task I ask for *confidence* in the War Ministry and in the branches of the administration which have been put under me. We approach our task in good spirits. But we need your confidence now more than ever.

If criticisms are to be made, we shall hear them gladly, and be ready to learn from them. They ought, however, if directed against the soldiers, to keep within the bounds which must in my opinion be set by a respect for the great deeds of

> our Army Commanders and for the deep sense of responsibility of our Officers Commanding at home. Gentlemen, if criticisms are to be made, they should be directed against me, if criticisms are to be made, you can all fall upon me. I shall be ready to answer, as I did at the head of the Ministry of Munitions. If criticism is to be directed against the soldiers beyond the frontier, it ought to take a form which is not bound to cause embitterment—and in fact in these serious times serious embitterment—out there ; it will not bring the views of this House and the views of the authorities whose business it is to manage the different services out there any nearer to one another, if—as unfortunately happened yesterday, as I have been able to verify from the minutes—the leader of a great party compared the Army Commanders to frantic maniacs. . . . '

During the speech of the War Minister the Government Socialists had taken part in the disturbance which had started on the Left.

After General Scheüch spoke the Independent Ledebour. He played off the Supreme Command's pessimistic view of 2nd October against the War Minister, and advised him to betake himself to the front, where military capacity was obviously scarce !

Noske, too, was full of criticism. In a long speech full of contradictions he gallantly stood up to Poles and Independents, but like Ebert he was anxious about the opinion of the masses, and had obviously been instructed to guard against the reproach that his party had become the ' good boys ' of the Government. He made a baseless attack upon the Minister of War and made out an antagonism between him and the Cabinet ; [1] his polemics against the old regime were free from malice, but not from a self-complacent ' I told you

[1] The War Minister repulsed this attack in the following rejoinder : ' I have here the uncorrected shorthand notes of my speech. At the end of it I used the following words : " You can always assist me, as the Chancellor suggested yesterday in his concluding words, in supplying the army with all that it now needs. Under certain circumstances it will still be necessary to oppose to a will for annihilation on the part of the enemy a German will to self-defence." I should really like to know where any contradiction between what the Chancellor said and what I have said, is to be discovered. We are passing into a new order of things and I should blame myself severely, if I did not try to frustrate this attempt of yours to cause new confusions.'

so ! ' which at this moment had a disruptive effect. It was now pointless to talk of the sins of our treatment of the Poles, or to spend hard words on the retired War Minister, Herr von Stein, and on Admiral von Capelle, because the one had neglected to develop the tanks and the other had failed to sink a single American transport. His protest against the cult of ' Expertness,' illustrated by pointing to the wonderful accomplishments of civilians in the organization of the English army was certainly valuable. His attack on the adherents of the old system who still clung to office hurt. But again and again the man's patriotism broke through, as for instance when he told the Poles that according to their arguments America must belong to the Red Indians ; when he protested against the threatened theft of our colonies ; or when he charged Herr Haase of having poured oil on the burning house : ' My party intends,' he said, ' that the German proletarian shall still have a roof over his head.'

One remark of his, however, made the House sit up ; not a soul had expected to hear it from the mouth of a Government Socialist. Noske mentioned the Conservative demands for a strong monarchy and added that that did not affect the opinion prevalent in the country that ' *it only needed a single generous gesture on the part of the Person who wears the Imperial Crown,' to relieve the sufferings of millions.*

At that very moment—before the official text had reached the Foreign Office—there was circulating through the lobbies of the Reichstag the new note from Wilson. It lent a sinister background to Noske's words.

CHAPTER VIII

WILSON'S THIRD NOTE—LUDENDORFF'S DISMISSAL

'DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
23rd October, 1918.

SIR,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Note of the 22nd, transmitting a communication, under date of the 20th, from the German Government, and to advise you that the President has instructed me to reply thereto as follows :

Having received the solemn and explicit assurance of the German Government that it unreservedly accepts the terms of peace laid down in his address to the Congress of the United States on 8th January, 1918, and the principles of settlement enunciated in his subsequent addresses, particularly the address of the 27th September, and that it desires to discuss the details of their application ; and that this wish and purpose emanate not from those who have hitherto dictated German policy and conducted the present war on Germany's behalf, but from Ministers who speak for the majority of the Reichstag and for an overwhelming majority of the German people ; and having received also the explicit promise of the present German Government that the humane rules of civilized warfare will be observed both on land and sea by the German armed forces, the President of the United States feels that he cannot decline to take up with the Governments with which the Government of the United States is associated the question of an armistice.

He deems it his duty to say again, however, that the only armistice he would feel justified in submitting for consideration would be one which should leave the United States and the Powers associated with her in a position to enforce any arrangements that may be entered into, and to make a renewal of hostilities on the part of Germany impossible. The President has, therefore, transmitted his correspondence with the present German Authorities to the Governments with which the Government of the United States is associated as a belligerent,

with the suggestion that, if those Governments are disposed to effect peace upon the terms and principles indicated, their military advisers and the military advisers of the United States be asked to submit to the Governments associated against Germany the necessary terms of such an armistice as will fully protect the interests of the peoples involved and ensure to the Associated Governments the unrestricted power to safeguard and enforce the details of the peace to which the German Government has agreed, provided they deem such an armistice possible from the military point of view. Should such terms of armistice be suggested, their acceptance by Germany will afford the best concrete evidence of her unequivocal acceptance of the terms and principles of peace from which the whole action proceeds.

The President would deem himself lacking in candour did he not point out in the frankest possible terms the reason why extraordinary safeguards must be demanded. Significant and important as the constitutional changes seem to be which are spoken of by the German Foreign Secretary in his Note of the 20th October, it does not appear that the principle of a Government responsible to the German people has yet been fully worked out, or that any guarantees either exist or are in contemplation that the alterations of principle and of practice now partially agreed upon will be permanent.

Moreover it does not appear that the heart of the present difficulty has been reached. It may be that future wars have been brought under the control of the German people ; but the present war has not been ; and it is with the present war that we are dealing. It is evident that the German people have no means of commanding the acquiescence of the military authorities of the Empire in the popular will ; that the power of the King of Prussia to control the policy of the Empire is unimpaired ; that the determining initiative still remains with those who have hitherto been the masters of Germany.

Feeling that the whole peace of the world depends now on plain speaking and straightforward action, the President deems it his duty to say, without any attempt to soften what may seem harsh words, that the nations of the world do not, and cannot trust the word of those who have hitherto been the masters of German policy, and to point out once more that in concluding peace and attempting to undo the infinite injuries and injustices of this war, the Government of the United States cannot deal with any but veritable representatives of the German people, who have been assured of a genuine constitu-

tional standing as the real rulers of Germany. If it must deal with the military masters and the monarchical autocrats of Germany now, or if it is likely to have to deal with them later in regard to the international obligations of the German Empire, it must demand, not peace negotiations but surrender. Nothing can be gained by leaving this essential thing unsaid.

Accept, Sir, the renewed assurances of my high consideration.

ROBERT LANSING.

Only one who regards his enemy's resistance as broken dares to use this language to him. And the worst of it was, I had to admit the spirit of our people *was* so far broken that not even the ' humiliating ' and ' exorbitant ' demands of the note would bring it to fight once again for the last time. The time had not yet come to give rein to my feelings and to throw his commission in the face of the man whose bad faith was holding up peace. It is true, I could insist on breaking off now—and then the Cabinet would break up. Then one of two things would happen, either I should be the one to go and should have to agitate for National Defence instead of carrying it through, or the Social Democrats would leave the Government, and then the basis for a National Rising would be destroyed for ever. And the masses *would* rise ; not, however, against the enemy, but against the war, and against their ' military Masters ' and ' autocratic Monarchs,' for whose protection it was in their opinion being carried on.[1]

Wilson's words were well calculated ; they were intended —and they would be so understood—to say to the German people : ' We are not demanding your capitulation ; peace negotiations can begin at once if you shake yourself free of those who have been your masters up to now.'

[1] The same anxiety could be read in a letter addressed by Herr von Batocki to Herr Wahnschaffe : ' The German people is willing and loyal, but it and the army have an intense longing for peace. Only if the impossibility of attaining this peace should become *clear to all*, would it pull itself together once more for a struggle of desperation. If it is now given to see in clear and plain terms that its Government is doing its very utmost for peace and not kicking against it, then it will follow that Government in the critical time that awaits us here at home. If not, we are faced with inevitable ruin.'

Was his promise honestly intended or was it a *ruse de guerre?* Our people were still unwilling to give up their belief in Wilson as their saviour and in the Peace of Justice which he promised.[1] There was only one way of testing his honesty, viz., that of proving to all the world the independence of our Parliamentary Government, secured as it was in fact and in constitutional law. Then Wilson would either have to keep his word and institute the longed-for peace negotiations on the basis of the Peace of Justice, or he would present conditions of capitulation—and be unmasked.

Two things were quite plain to me. First: Without such a showing-up of Wilson any rising of the people was out of the question. And secondly: The proclamation of National Defence in the teeth of the masses must end in Bolshevism. This was for me the lesson of Russia.[2]

But perhaps Wilson's demands went further than I had supposed, and aimed at securing the Abdication. I kept putting this question again and again to myself, worried my

[1] The extent to which even the Supreme Command—and even on 23rd October—counted on Wilson's *bona fides* is shown by the following instructions for the Armistice Commission: (*Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 76A dated 23rd October, and signed by Hindenburg and Ludendorff). 'Instructions for the Armistice Commission: The military situation is such that the forces of the army in the field are no longer sufficient to hold our position *securely* . . . recognition of this situation led to the peace offer. In spite of this we must of course remain prepared at any time to renew the struggle in case we should be faced with terms which make our future impossible. To put such conditions is probably not President Wilson's intention. It is more likely that France and England will want to continue the war, in order to enforce inacceptable conditions. In this case it is not impossible that the United States would withdraw from a war thus prolonged . . . But we have the greatest possible interest in preserving a frank and unreserved attitude towards the President. . . . But general considerations also demand that frankness and confidence shall be shown towards the American representatives during the negotiations of the Commission. There can be no doubt of the far-reaching differences as to political and military aims which exist between the United States and its European allies. Any mistrust which the United States might feel towards us would tend to efface these differences, relations of confidence between the United States and us to emphasize them. . . . As soon, however, as humiliating conditions are put by them (the English and French representatives), we must take up a position of extreme reserve. It may be expected that the United States will not lend its support to such demands. . . .'

[2] With the cry: 'Down with the war!' Lenin's masses had marched against the Kerenski Government.

head for hours with niceties of interpretation, and finally came back to the conclusion that according to the meaning of the words, the constitutional changes already introduced and planned would provide the basis for the negotiations.[1]

I therefore gave instructions to push through our draft bills with the greatest possible speed and also consented to have those clauses which limited the power of the Commanders of Districts and which defined the responsibility of the Chancellor included in our draft as supplementary proposals of the parties.[2]

I then gave Geheimrat Simons the following general instructions for answering the note :

> ' The present note does not provide a suitable occasion for calling out a *levée en masse*. . . .

[1] We interpreted the phrases of the note in detail as follows :

1. President Wilson declares that he *is* (present tense) only in a position to propose to the Allies terms of armistice which mean making Germany defenceless.

2. But he also expressly declares, that these guarantees are only necessary because there is no security for the present system of Government lasting.

3. In his conclusion he emphasizes the difference between Peace by Capitulation and Peace by Negotiation.

He demands Peace by Capitulation, so long as such security cannot be given ; but suggests to the German people the possibility of Peace by Negotiation, *i.e.*, a peace without military capitulation, should such necessary security be given.

The gist of the whole is : ' Give me political guarantees, and I will do without the military guarantees.' (Note of 24th October for Solf's use at the Cabinet Meeting.)

[2] The amendments and additions to the Imperial Constitution proposed by the Majority Parties in agreement with the Government during the Third Reading increased the responsibility of the Imperial Chancellor to an extent which enabled the Conservatives to contend that they were no longer amendments, but equivalent to a completely new article of the constitution (*vide* Westarp, *op. cit.* Vol. I., p. 69). They asserted the impossibility of introducing any such article in the Third Reading and demanded fresh proceedings. A delay of this kind was impossible if the Wilson Note which had reached us on 24th October was to be answered—though the objections of the Conservatives were in fact well founded and at any other time we should have had to take account of them. Thus on 26th October the proposals of the Majority Parties were adopted, the Conservatives and some members of the Free Conservatives voting against them.

The Imperial Constitution was altered as follows :

1. For Sections 2 and 3 of Article 11 the following was substituted : ' For a Declaration of War in the name of the Empire, the consent of

In the German army and among the German workmen, the feeling that we could have peace if we went further on the path of democracy, would become insistent.

This makes it necessary not to break off the thread of our negotiations with Wilson. We can only do this at a moment when Wilson has put himself in the wrong in the eyes of the whole German people, and when it is clear that we are not in any sense whatever responsible for the continuation of the war.

. . . It may be the case that Wilson's mistrust of us is merely hypocritical. It may be the case that, even if we were to allay it, he would still stand upon the capitulation demanded by Foch, but if there is only a one per cent. probability in favour of the supposition that his intentions are honest and that he is in a certain sense asking us to help him to the definite pro-

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Federal Council and Reichstag is necessary. Treaties of Peace and such Treaties with foreign Powers as have to do with matters which are the subject of Imperial legislation, require the consent of the Federal Council and of the Reichstag.'

2. The following clauses were added to Article 15 : ' For the conduct of his office the Chancellor requires the confidence of the Reichstag. The Chancellor takes the responsibility for all acts of political significance which the Kaiser in execution of the powers granted him in the Imperial Constitution may perform. The Chancellor and his Deputy are responsible for their conduct in office to the Federal Council and to the Reichstag.'

3. In Art. 17 the words ' who thereby takes upon himself the responsibility,' were cancelled.

4. To Art. 53, Section 1, the following clause was added : ' The appointment, transfer, promotion and retirement of officers and officials of the Navy requires the counter-signature of the Chancellor.'

5. In Art. 64, Section 2 (appointment of General Officers Commanding State Contingents, etc.) in the first clause after the word ' Kaiser ' was added : ' with the counter-signature of the Chancellor.'

6. To Art. 66 were added the following clauses (3 and 4) : ' The appointment, transfer, promotion, and retirement of the officers and military officials of a State Contingent requires the counter-signature of the War Minister of that Contingent. The War Ministers are responsible for the administration of their contingents to the Federal Council and to the Reichstag.'

Von Graefe, Member of the Reichstag, session of 26th October, 1918 : ' . . . I can understand how these gentlemen gave [it] their support on former occasions when the present tendency had not yet found expression, alleging the precedents of Bavaria and formerly of Prussia. I can understand that this was the only result which they then desired. I do not in fact dispute that the Kaiser's Military Cabinet is an unpopular institution even among the officers. I am quite ready to concede to the member for Meiningen, Herr Mueller, that army circles have often felt that a certain measure of control over what goes on there would be quite desirable and therefore a change in this respect perhaps possible. . . . '

gramme he needs, by means of a few striking democratic measures—then we must produce these measures. . . .

I propose the following method of procedure. With regard to the armistice conditions we should reply to him that we refuse to capitulate to the enemy armies at discretion, on the ground that any such betrayal of its own people is impossible above all for a popular Government.

Then we should point out to him in measured terms that the fundamental revision of the Constitution is still going on and suggest that he ought not to expect any Government with a conscience to adopt—from tactical considerations and in order to influence a foreign country—measures, which are not supported by the declared will and the innermost conviction of the German people. . . .'

Then on the afternoon of the 24th Haeften appeared. He had hurriedly left the Reichstag session to warn me that next day the Social Democrats were going to demand the abdication of the Kaiser!

The critical remark of Noske's, he reported, referred to Wilson's note. Haeften had been talking to the Foreign Minister, when Noske came up and handed Solf the unofficially-published text of Wilson's answer. As Solf read it his face became more and more grave, and Noske said: 'The note is not so bad; if only the Kaiser goes, we shall get a decent peace.'

Haeften [1] urged me to hold up the official publication, so that the Kaiser could still anticipate events and announce his abdication simultaneously with the note. The Kaiser should only lay down the sceptre of his own free initiative, as the King of Bulgaria had done—never under pressure from the Social Democrats. If His Majesty does not make up his mind at once, then the only alternative is to break with Wilson; and then it is a case for the command: 'Helmets off and pray!'

I deprecated this, but Haeften could not compose himself.

[1] Since the publication of this book, von Haeften has sent me a report, containing important additional information as to the attitude of the Supreme Command to Wilson's third note. I feel it my duty to put this exposé of his at the disposal of the public—*vide* Appendix VI. at the end of this volume.

Wilson's note was not yet known to the mass of the public ; and it was intolerable to him to reflect that in another day or two the demand for abdication would rise from the ranks of the people, and then the moment for a dignified abdication would have passed. The same afternoon he informed his chief that rapid and far-reaching decisions would have to be taken. General Ludendorff declared his intention of coming in company with the Field-Marshal to Berlin, and that at once. Haeften had me informed of this intention of the Supreme Command.

I demanded that this journey should be postponed, in the conviction that, whatever happened, the Government must avoid giving an impression of having come to decisions under pressure from General Ludendorff—particularly since we wanted our answer to take a dignified form.

The Cabinet came together for a night session under Payer's chairmanship. Haussmann came to me for a few minutes beforehand. We discussed the effect that Wilson's words might have. He asserted with confidence that the German people would not get rid of its Kaiser at the bidding of the *enemy*. I thanked him for his manly words.

The other Ministers took the same line as I in the interpretation of the note. At the meeting (of 24th October) it was Scheidemann who expressed the hope that we should still be able to get round the question of the Kaiser,[1] since the Party Executive had already instructed its Press not to complicate the peace negotiations by discussing Abdication.

The deliberations were dominated by anxiety with regard to the sinking morale of the country. Was any National Defence still practicable ? On this point a difference of opinion showed itself for the first time. Haussmann hit the nail on the head ; so long, he said, as the conditions of armistice are only to be gathered from Wilson's equivocal phrases, the people would not grasp how intolerable they

[1] Minutes of the night meeting of the Cabinet of 24th October, 1918. Scheidemann : ' Should we succeed in fulfilling Wilson's demand, he hopes to get round the Kaiser question. Does not want to have to solve question of Monarchy, would prefer simply to shelve it. To Social Democrats outward form of constitution quite a secondary consideration.'

were. We should have to learn the threatened terms in all their detail, then the breach with Wilson would be necessary and possible.

Scheidemann was still deeply impressed by the ugly scenes which had been witnessed at the calling up of the drafts. The men who were to-day here being taken from the factories, he said, were revolutionaries—a *levée en masse* had become impossible. '*Liebknecht has been carried shoulder-high by soldiers who have been decorated with the Iron Cross. Who could have dreamt of such a thing happening three weeks ago!*' This was the frightened cry of a leader who suddenly finds that his men have deserted him. And it was not only the Social Democrats who were breaking down; Erzberger brought the alarming news that the Centre Party had unanimously declared themselves against any scheme of National Defence.

The War Minister admitted that excesses had occurred in connection with the transport of the drafts—now only those workmen were being taken who had never yet seen foreign service—but on the Western front our resistance was stiffening. The troops were numerically weak and tired, but were holding out well. 'It would be a tremendous gain if once we could bring some troops back into rest quarters.' He said that Ludendorff regarded the front as capable of holding out, and that he was in favour of breaking off the negotiations.

Count Roedern reminded him of the other theatres of War, in particular of the Balkan front, which was in process of being formed. It was to be expected that the French and English would soon checkmate Turkey,[1] with the probable help of Rumania, and would then turn against Hungary, where the newly-appointed Prime Minister Karolyi was ready

[1] At the Press conference of 25th October we were informed that a French division was thought to be on the way to Widdin, one British division to be coming to the Dobrudja, and five British divisions to be marching via Sofia and Philippopolis against the Turkish frontier. The *Manchester Guardian History of the War* states that Widdin had been already occupied on the 20th and that it was the use of the Bulgarian roads which had made this advance possible.

to receive them with open arms. Already the oil supplies from Rumania had been cut off.

On this one point Scheüch was able to assure us that with regard to the fundamental question of oil we were better off than we thought. Now that the War Ministry had got hold of the naval stocks, our military and naval oil requirements were covered up to 1st April, 1919. Industry and railways could be supplied even after 1st April.

The majority of the Ministers were of the opinion that in formulating our answer to Wilson we ought not to bind ourselves to continue the struggle. Also that to judge of the military situation it was not enough to hear the view of General Ludendorff alone ; there had been signs which suggested that he no longer felt sure of himself. All were agreed that the time had come to hear the views of other Army Commanders.

They went on to discuss whether General Ludendorff could be left in his command. Someone remarked that a beaten general ought to resign. But none of them wanted the Cabinet to take the initiative. They were for waiting on events and for hoping that the proposed hearing of the other generals would bring a solution.

Only on 25th October I learned that the Field-Marshal and General Ludendorff had left Spa the evening before, in spite of the instructions I had sent them to remain. It was clear to me that this journey could only end in General Ludendorff's dismissal. This piece of defiance only gave me the occasion I needed ; I was also influenced by a desire to ease the internal and external situation.

It was my loss of confidence in him that was really decisive.

I was urged to look upon the retirement of the Field-Marshal too not merely as an inevitable, but also as a desirable consequence, since Hindenburg might be replaced by Gallwitz. This was not my view. I drafted a memorandum to the Kaiser demanding that General Ludendorff be dismissed or I should resign, but requesting that every thing possible should be done to induce the Field-Marshal

to stay and thus to avoid alarming army and people unnecessarily.

The Cabinet knew nothing of the step that I had been preparing, but in the meantime was holding an indignation meeting upon a fresh case of General Ludendorff's exceeding his powers. The Supreme Command had already publicly shown its attitude to Wilson's note and had decided on its own account for a breaking-off of the negotiations. At the Press meeting of 25th October the following Army Order was read :

' To be circulated to all formations : [1]

Wilson says in his answer that he is ready to propose to his allies the opening of armistice negotiations, but that any such armistice must render Germany powerless to take up arms again. He will only negotiate peace with Germany, if she is ready to comply entirely with the Allies' demands for her internal re-organization ; otherwise he will only consider unconditional surrender.

Wilson's answer is a demand for the army to capitulate, and is therefore inacceptable for us soldiers. It is the proof that the will for our annihilation which in 1914 let loose the war upon us is to-day as strong as ever. It is further a proof that the phrase " Peace of Justice " is in the mouth of our enemies merely a trick to undermine our resistance. Thus, for us soldiers, Wilson's answer can only be an inducement to prolong our resistance to the utmost of our power. When once the enemy recognizes that no sacrifice will avail to break through the German front, they will be ready for a peace which secures Germany her future—in particular a future for the great mass of her people.'

General Ludendorff had put his signature to these words in the genuine belief that he was acting in full accord with the Government ; he was led to do so as the result of telephone messages, in which Haeften had presumably not always distinguished very accurately between his own personal opinion and that of the Government. Then objections had made themselves felt at Headquarters and an attempt was made at the last moment that night to hold up the Army Order in question ; but this was too late to prevent it being

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 76 B.

communicated to the Army Commands and to the Press Conference.

In any case it was a piece of unwarranted interference ; at a moment when everything depended on the Cabinet's being able to maintain and to prove its independence of military attempts to influence it, the Supreme Command had no business to anticipate the attitude we should take up to the note. It made no difference whether their manifesto was intended to support us or not.

The Generals had arrived that afternoon and had gone on at once to Schloss Bellevue to make their report. There they demanded the breaking-off of negotiations. The Kaiser refused to take any decision and referred them to me. I let them know that the Vice-Chancellor von Payer would act for me and receive them at 9 p.m.

While still occupied in the drafting of the letter to His Majesty I was interrupted by Wahnschaffe ; on the basis of telegrams which had reached him in the course of the day he was able to inform me of the interpretation which had generally been attached to Wilson's note.

My cousin, Prince Ernst zu Hohenlohe-Langenburg, wired from Berne, where he had been negotiating with American delegates as head of a German Commission on Prisoner Questions, as follows :

'*25th October*, 1918.[1]

To Prince Max of Baden, Berlin—Personal.

I have just learned from a reliable source, that the conclusion of Wilson's note can really only mean that the only way to obtain even moderately reasonable conditions leads through the abdication of the Kaiser. It seems that Wilson recognizes that the monarchical form of government has a basis in our history and suits the conditions in which the German people have to live. But he is quite unable to dispel the ideas which are prevalent in America and throughout the Entente countries as to the Kaiser's person, the part he has played in the war, and his influence on the conduct of home and foreign affairs. My informant believes that such a step would make it easier for Wilson to influence the Senate in favour of his peace plans—

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 78.

and the Senate has been recently exerting itself more and more to bring about Germany's complete subjection. At the same time it would strengthen peace currents in the other Entente countries. The maintenance of the dynasty would thus be assured, whereas it, and ultimately all the other German dynasties, would be endangered, if once the belief got about—and the Entente would doubtless manage that—that only the Kaiser's person has stood in the way of peace.

Apart from this, according to my informant, the Americans are too well aware of the weakness of our military situation for any proclamation of National Defence to make them have doubts of a final Entente victory. They know that our collapse is only a question of time. Any attempt to prolong the final struggle would only be regarded as a fresh proof of the predominant influence of the military, and would increase their suspicion that no reliance is to be placed on any of our constitutional reforms.

In view of the far-reaching effects which the decisions you have to make will have, I regard it as my duty, however disagreeable, to pass on to you this information from a quarter which, in view of its connections and on personal grounds, is to be taken very seriously.

ERNST HOHENLOHE.

One could not fail to recognise here the influence of the 'Switzerland point of view,' but a similar message reached us from Bavaria. The Prussian Minister in Munich, Herr von Treutler, telegraphed as follows:

'*25th October*, 1918.[1]

TO THE IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR—SECRET.

It is my painful duty to report to Your Grand Ducal Highness that Wilson's answer, published here yesterday, is interpreted by authorities in Bavaria in a sense which takes the last paragraph as directed against the person of our Kaiser. The Prime Minister and the Minister of War are of the opinion that the wording of the note admits of no other interpretation; the veiled forms of expression are only intended to give us an opportunity of taking this painful step voluntarily. In any case, the above authorities urge you to have it made clear to His Majesty that the enemy will not grant us any acceptable peace unless this great sacrifice be made. Should His Majesty thus be willing to lay down the Imperial crown, he

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 77.

would only be carrying further, and putting the crowning touch to, his labours of twenty-six years in the cause of peace. His figure would live on in history as the noblest, the most high-minded and the most self-sacrificing of the German people's benefactors.

Count Lerchenfeld has received instructions in the same sense. TREUTLER.

To-day saw the break-down of the self-imposed restraint which the German Press had up to now shown towards the Kaiser. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* demanded the Kaiser's abdication and the Crown Prince's renunciation of the Throne as the democratic guarantee which Wilson was demanding, and which alone would satisfy him.

Even then my eyes were still closed to the abundance of signs which might have told me that Wilson was deliberately trying to force the question of abdication upon the notice of the Germans. I clung to the favourable news from the Hague and would not give up my hope that the people could be kept from demanding the abdication on their own account.

Thus I determined to finish my letter to the Kaiser without touching the question of the abdication. It is true that, when late in the evening the head of the Civil Cabinet came to fetch my letter, I felt myself bound to give him Prince Hohenlohe's telegram and, as far as I can remember, Treutler's too. He was to lay them before the Kaiser at my request, but without comment.

On the morning of 26th October Payer, Solf and Roedern sat at my bedside. Payer described to me his conversation of the evening before with the two Army Commanders, at which Scheer and Scheüch had also been present. The Supreme Command had persisted in their view that we ought not to negotiate further. 'We can't answer that sort of man!' they said. Our army still stood unconquered on enemy soil, and must not capitulate. To the question as to what chance we should have if the war were to go on, Payer had received no direct answer. Instead there had followed —exactly as on 17th October, an enumeration of a number of unfavourable circumstances—for instance :

The enemy was suffering from a shortage of coal, and their power of offensive was weakening ;

The Army Group of Crown Prince Rupprecht had just succeeded in holding a 7 km. line of front ; the Army Group of the German Crown Prince a 10 km. line ;

The difference of opinion between Clemenceau and Foch was evident—Clemenceau making more exacting demands than Foch, who had a higher opinion of our powers of resistance ;

A French opinion of a few days ago stated that the German troops were holding out well, while France would have to give in in four weeks, if things went on as they were going.

Then they referred to the possibility of internal disorders in France.

Thereupon Payer had referred to the state of morale at home, the food situation and the imminent collapse of Austria—' which may have disastrous consequences for us.' Ludendorff had demanded from Payer that, should we receive a really unfavourable offer of armistice terms, the Government should bind itself to put the scheme of the popular rising into execution. Payer had refused to be tied down in this way and had demanded that other Army Commanders should be heard as well, before a decision was taken. Then Ludendorff had once more threatened resignation ; the Field-Marshal's refusal was less decided. The conference broke up at midnight without having achieved a result. General Ludendorff finally told Payer in the strictest confidence, how the troops had in some places fallen back while the enemy was still 800 yards off, and how a picked Cyclist Brigade on its way forward had been greeted by the retreating troops with the cry of ' Strike breakers ! '

While I was listening to the Vice-Chancellor's report, Haeften rushed into my room in a great state of excitement, exclaiming : ' General Ludendorff is dismissed ! ' ' And Hindenburg ? ' ' He is to stay.' All the company jumped up with the cry : ' Thank God ! '

General Ludendorff did not go to the Kaiser in the early morning of 26th October unprepared. I had deliberately

said nothing to the representative of the High Command, in order to spare him troubles of conscience. But when Haeften came to my Adjutant's room early in the morning, he heard of the step which had been taken in the night and hurried to his Chief to give him warning, 'so that the concluding scene may pass off with dignity.' He had caught Ludendorff before the latter started for Schloss Bellevue.[1]

General Ludendorff and his loyal followers, Haeften in particular, have never been able to understand how I could make up my mind to dispense with the Victor of Tannenberg. The seeming ingratitude of Kaiser, people, Chancellor, even of the Field-Marshal, for whose patriotic sacrifice he had no understanding, filled General Ludendorff with an unspeakable bitterness. He never recovered from that day.

I asked him to visit me, but he did not come. I should have liked to see him, to tell him—what is still my opinion to-day—that the worst sins of omission of the last year's were not his fault. It was less a case of his bullying them than of the others kowtowing to him—and that, too, at times when he would have been only too glad to have some political leadership behind him. For me he remained, up to 29th September, a great general and a great man. That day brought his tragical collapse—collapse of his confidence in the army, of his judgment, of his nerves. Only his sense of his own prestige remained, to prevent him going to his Kaiser and saying; '*Magna clade victus sum*, I ask for my retirement, or I demand at least that other commanders be heard before we turn to the enemy.'

After General Ludendorff's dismissal I thought I should have my path clear for answering Wilson's note according to my own ideas. In accordance with my instructions, Simons had drafted the note as follows:

> 'The German Government has received the answer of the President of the United States.
>
> The President is aware of the far-reaching changes which have taken and are taking place in the constitutional life of the

[1] Cf. Ludendorff, *Erinnerungen*, p. 616 f.

German people. All decisive powers are, in fact as well as in constitutional law, in the hands of the popular government, with whom the peace negotiations will have to be carried on.

The German Government therefore awaits proposals for an armistice, not suggestions of surrender. If the armistice is to introduce a Peace of Justice in accordance with the President's principles, it ought not to deprive the German people of the possibility of assenting to each detail of the Peace Treaty of their own free will.'

I attached decisive importance to the antithesis : Armistice —Surrender. On this point I was supported by Max Warburg, who, though never known to appear uninvited, on that twenty-fifth of October turned up at the Chancellor's Office full of indignation at Wilson's note. ' I am absolutely sure of American mentality,' he said ; ' we ought to turn upon them, and not at any price allow ourselves to be trodden on any longer. There must be a something included in the note, which warns the enemy against the resolution of a people driven to despair.'

Solf had submitted our note to the Cabinet on the morning of the 26th and had met with keen opposition.[1]

Scheidemann had interrupted the reading with the cry : ' He will break off ! He will break off ! ' Erzberger and

[1] Among my papers I find two drafts, and I am unable to say precisely which of the two was read at the meeting in question, and therefore here give the second draft :

' The German Government has taken cognizance of President Wilson's answer, and feels itself bound to reply in the spirit of frankness in which the President has spoken.

The German Government has accepted the terms put forward by the President as the basis of a Peace of Justice. In accordance with these terms it has endeavoured to arrange an armistice and not a capitulation, a peace by free consent and not a peace imposed by violence. It is all the more impossible where a government is responsible to the people for it to bow to a peace of violence, so long as the people has any power of resistance left. The German Government understands from the President's note that he has no desire to impose a peace of violence on a democratically-governed Germany, provided the new form of government can give him guarantees of its own endurance. The President is aware of the decisive changes which have recently taken place and are still taking place in German constitutional life. The German Government bases itself on the belief that self-determination is not only a right, but a duty which binds the German people to undertake no re-organization of its constitution which does not correspond to its own character and convictions.

Scheidemann had joined forces in drafting a humble reply and stormed against my proposal. It was no longer a question of tact and tone ; the two ministers had ceased to believe in the possibility of National Defence.

Scheidemann was only concerned that the Cabinet's decision should find favour in the eyes of the masses, who were threatening to desert to the Independents. ' We must not tell Wilson that he is not to put any conditions to us which we could not accept. He made a terrible admission of his own powerlessness : " Yesterday in my party they were saying : ' We must have peace, we can do no more.' " They wanted to hear the note before it was sent off. A note of this kind would meet with a fierce opposition from them.'

Erzberger seconded him with the most dangerous of all arguments ; we might, he said, get bad armistice terms and yet conclude a good peace. At this Haussmann flared up. Erzberger, he said, was making a fundamental mistake : bad armistice terms meant a bad peace. General Scheüch tried in vain to steady the tone of the proceedings. ' Our position,' he said, ' is not desperate, either abroad or at home ; we can still supply all that the front needs.' In vain Friedberg remarked that the honour of the people was bound up with the honour of the army. Scheidemann suggested that the sharp tone of the note would be attributed to the visit of Ludendorff and Hindenburg, and would be taken as one more proof of the predominance of the military.

The meeting of the forenoon had been interrupted to enable Simons to report to me. He had championed my view in vain before the Cabinet and was now of the opinion that it was time to risk breaking with the Ministers.

I still hoped that they would let themselves be convinced. Herr von Payer opened the meeting at 1-30 p.m. with the news that General Ludendorff had received his *congé*, while the Field-Marshal would remain ; he added that in view of this fact the Chancellor demanded that the note should take on a more dignified tone. Scheüch went so far as to say the Kaiser's decision had been particularly due to the considera-

tion that we should be able to adopt a more resolute tone now that Ludendorff had gone.

All declared their agreement except Erzberger and Scheidemann who stubbornly persisted in their old arguments, never for a moment forgetting the vast bulk of faint-hearted public opinion which loomed up behind them and demanded concession. As Scheidemann kept on appealing to his party, the patience of the Vice-Chancellor snapped. 'We are no mere Executive Committee of the parties,' he cried, 'we have to take the responsibility ourselves.'

In the end they agreed upon the following formulation:

> 'The German Government has taken cognizance of the answer of the President of the United States. The President is aware of the far-reaching changes which have taken and are taking place in German constitutional life. Peace negotiations will be carried on by a democratic Government, whose powers are decisive and are anchored for ever in the Constitution of the German Empire. The German Government therefore expects proposals for an Armistice and not for a Surrender. Only then can the armistice lead to a Peace of Justice, such as the President has outlined in his various public utterances.'

This note was justly stigmatized by Payer as a 'God-forsaken hamstrung piece of bungling,' and Haussmann declared that it had been 'filleted.' But at least the antithesis: Armistice—Surrender, remained.

About 6 p.m. I received from Austria news which confirmed my worst fears. Wilson's answer to Vienna had been, in fact, the signal to the various nationalities for a concerted break-up of the Danube monarchy. The Emperor Karl saw his only hope in cutting Austria's fate loose from Germany.

In the evening I heard that the Austrian Ambassador, Prince Hohenlohe, was waiting to see me. He was a broken man. 'People will spit at me—I can show my face no longer in the streets of Berlin.' He informed me that his Sovereign's decision to approach the enemy with a request for a separate peace was irrevocable. He laid before me the

letter from the Emperor Karl, which had been simultaneously sent off to His Majesty :

'*27th October*, 1918.[1]

MY ESTEEMED FRIEND,

It is my painful duty to inform you that my people is neither able nor willing to carry on the war any longer.

I have no right to oppose myself to the popular will now that I have no longer any hope in the war being brought to a fortunate conclusion—since the indispensable moral and material conditions of success are lacking. The useless shedding of blood would be a crime forbidden me by my conscience.

Public order at home and the Monarchical Principle will be most gravely endangered, if we do not at once put an end to the struggle.

Even the most deep-seated feelings of a friend and of a brother-in-arms must give way to the necessity of saving that Portion of states, whose several destinies the providence of God has committed into my hands. I must therefore acquaint you with my irrevocable decision to issue within twenty-four hours a request for a separate peace and an immediate armistice.

I have no choice, my Sovereign Conscience commands me so to act.

In loyal friendship,

KARL.'

Prince Hohenlohe added that every conceivable form of influence had been tried and had been in vain.

The news did not reach the public that evening, but in political circles it went from mouth to mouth and caused universal consternation. Austria even before Turkey !

While our note was being put into code, Solf was dining with Herr von Holtzendorff. Federal Councillors, ex-Ministers, and a leading figure in our economic life were also present. Solf informed them of the text of our note and roused a unanimous protest.

The company declared that in view of the situation which had now arisen the proud tone of the note was quite impossible either for home or for foreign consumption. We could not afford to take any risk of Wilson's breaking off. The German people could not stand it.

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 83.

Thereupon Solf held up the note for that night on his own responsibility and informed the Cabinet next day of the situation. The majority of the Ministers approved of his decision and regarded the express warning against demanding surrender as no longer possible; the three Swabians, Groeber, Payer and Haussmann regretted that decision. Haussmann insisted that we must not begin competing with the Emperor Karl as to which could get in his capitulation first.

My negotiations with the Cabinet were rendered very difficult by my illness. I told Simons to urge them not to send the note at all, if the antithesis: Armistice—Surrender was not to have a place in it. The Ministers declared that the German people were expecting the note, which had been already announced, and that they must not be disappointed. Finally a new formulation was found, which was accepted by Solf, and to which I too gave my consent:

'THE FOURTH GERMAN NOTE OF 27TH OCTOBER, 1918.[1]

Dispatched 4.35 p.m.

The German Government has taken cognizance of the answer of the President of the United States.

The President is aware of the far-reaching changes which have been carried out and are being carried out in the German constitutional life. The peace negotiations will be conducted by a people's Government, in whose hands all the decisive powers are concentrated, both actually and constitutionally. The military authorities are also subject to it.

The German Government now awaits proposals for an armistice which shall be a first step towards a just peace such as the President has outlined in his proclamations.

SOLF,

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.'

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 85.

CHAPTER IX

VAIN ATTEMPTS TO ENLIGHTEN THE KAISER. THE REPORT OF GENERALS VON GALLWITZ AND VON MUDRA

The constitutional changes had been brought through all three Readings in the last three days at a speed which was hardly compatible with the Constitution, and certainly not with our dignity. Their progress was accompanied by shrieks of triumph from the Poles and by continuous squabbles of Conservatives and Independents, who both of them wanted, whatever happened, to force a discussion of the Wilson Note in plenary session.

I could not allow myself to be held up on the path of constitutional reforms even by a letter of the Field-Marshal, which I received at this time. He appealed to me as a Prince and as an Officer not to permit any curtailment of the rights of the Supreme War Lord :

> ' How is our Officers' Corps, true to the bone in its loyalty to the Kaiser, to look on and see its August[1] War Lord lose his power of command, as is apparently intended ? Will it not lose all self-control ? '

I felt myself in a position to re-assure the Field-Marshal through Haeften, that the sting had been taken out of all proposals which would have been likely to offend military feeling or to tamper with the structure of the army. General Scheüch had threatened resignation when proposals were mooted for exacting an oath of loyalty to the Constitution, or for subordinating the Chief of the General Staff to the Minister of War. Payer and I, and Gröber in particular, had supported him to the best of our ability.

[1] The German title " All-Highest " (allerhöchst) has been so translated throughout. [Tr.]

The changes, which thus finally remained, corresponded to a generally-felt need—even in 1908 a Majority could have been had for requiring the countersigning of the Kaiser's public political utterances (interviews etc.) ; or they were a response to the wishes of many even in the Corps of Officers itself ; or—as in the case of the counter-signature of appointments by the Minister of War, they but restored a condition of things which had formerly obtained in the Prussian army and which still obtained in the Bavarian, Saxon and Wuerttemberg contingents.

Thus, it was not our legislative proposals, which were undignified in themselves, but the moment chosen for putting them into execution that was undignified. We were improving the internal arrangements of our house at a moment when the living wall which protected it was threatening to fall in. We felt this humiliation no less than did the Conservatives, but believed that there was no other course than this open to us.

It was certainly not party lust of power, which led us to take it—I need not trouble myself further with this mean suspicion. Our only motive was the anxiety as to how to hold up the demands for abdication. It was noticeable what voices were raised at this time to urge on the constitutional reforms, and what grounds were alleged for them. The Social Democrat David, who by conviction and temperament was opposed to all subversive changes, declared on 25th October at a meeting held in the Ministry of the Interior that the question of the moment was what action could be taken to save the Kaiser. At the Cabinet meetings of the Prussian Government Hergt assented on general grounds to the new regulation of the Powers of Command, and declared as regards the most radical change—the amendment of Article 11—that the Government ought to lead the way and not to wait for the initiative of the parties. It was the Bavarian Prime Minister, von Dandl, who at the meeting of the Federal Council Committee of 20th October proposed answering Wilson's Second Note by abolishing the Military Cabinet.

I know now that all these speculations were built upon sand. History will reproach me for not having recognized the necessity of abdication in time. To-day I regret not having taken alarm at Haeften's words. I ought to have acted on the evening of the 24th.

Max Weber's judgment pronounced after the war moved me deeply. Prince Max, he said, blinded by dynastic sentimentality, failed to see the realities of the situation and let the precious days and weeks slip by.

I admit that my judgment was coloured by sentiment, but I believe Max Weber is unfair to my actual motives. I was possessed by the idea of bringing Kaiser and people together again ; and in pursuing this purpose, I thought no less of the country than of him. The succession of the Crown Prince would not have eased the situation, but would have made matters worse ; then came the grandson—and ' Woe to the people that has a child-king.'

A reforming government has a particular need of being able to rely on the unbroken authority of the Head of the State, if it is not merely to impose its will superficially on the Government machine, but also to overcome passive resistance. The Kaiser's authority in army and civil service was still unshaken, thanks to the overpowering tradition of docility. The few weeks of co-operation with him had given me the double assurance that the Kaiser was doing his best to work loyally with the Cabinet, and that my personal and family influence would enable me to break through the clouds of unreality which had surrounded him for years and prevented him from bringing his great talents to bear upon the world of fact.

. . . . . .

As successor to General Ludendorff His Majesty chose General Groener. The Government took no part in the appointment. Decisive for the appointment of this most distinguished officer had probably been his unique knowledge of the railway system—knowledge which might be of great importance for execution of a strategic retirement or of an agreed evacuation.

The change in the Supreme Command made remarkably little stir among the people ; but throughout this time it was always difficult to foresee what would excite the people and what would leave them cold. The news that our resistance on the Western front was stiffening did not attract the notice it deserved, any more than did the ' Job's messengers ' who arrived from Austria and Turkey, and who ought to have made people realize that their dropping out of the alliance was only a question of days. The public had lost its grip of the situation as a whole, and kept running after any new idea that turned up.

On 27th October the public was already possessed by a blind conviction, menacing and blatant, that the Kaiser only needed to abdicate, and we should get a good armistice. Every conceivable attempt to influence the Press had been made. The Councillors of Legation, Ferdinand von Stumm and Schmidthals, had declared at the Press Conference that it would only be a sign of abjectness and servility of soul, if the same people which had kept applauding the Kaiser in peace time were now to fall away from him.

The Social Democratic papers had kept their self-control ; but since the outburst of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* there was no stopping things ; how could the *Vorwaerts* afford to appear an even more pious supporter of the Government than this bourgeois paper.[1]

But the most unfortunate thing was, that the cry of the decoy-birds in Switzerland had penetrated to my Cabinet. Scheidemann summed up the views of the Herron circle, as they had been reported to him in the following words[2] : ' No peace of violence for the German people, no mercy for Kaiser or Crown Prince.' And I was to be won over to the Wilson creed at any price.

[1] The *Frankfurter Zeitung* had written on 25th October : ' It is true the meaning of Wilson's words is not absolutely certain. But their meaning if they have one can only be that the conditions of armistice outlined in the first part of the note—which would certainly make it hardly distinguishable from a surrender—are only to apply in case of having to negotiate with the ' military despots and autocratic monarchs.'

[2] Cabinet meeting of 10 a.m., 28th October.

On 27th October, two messengers of Prince Ernst zu Hohenlohe-Langenburg, Major Draudt and Commander Mensing, appeared at my house and handed me the following letter from the Prince :

'BERNE,
25th October, 1918.

MY DEAR MAX,

I send these few lines in explanation of my telegram of yesterday, since I feel it my duty as a friend to send you, in these grave days of decision, a piece of information which my being here enables me to acquire. I do not want to play the irresponsible adviser—a part that I hate, but to secure that the picture which you form of the situation is illuminated from as many different angles as possible.

The informant, to whom I spoke, told me roughly the following :

The American note of 23rd October is the result of a compromise between Wilson, who would like to play the part of peace-maker ; the Senate, in which influential currents of opinion are for Germany's complete subjection ; and probably also the Entente countries. It is so far a triumph for Wilson, in that he has succeeded in avoiding the demand for unconditional surrender. He is ready to negotiate an armistice and peace, but only on the condition, that those rulers of Germany who in the eyes of the Entente are responsible for the war and for the conduct of the war, disappear. The President's words 'military rulers and autocratic monarchs' are aimed at three persons : the Kaiser, the Crown Prince and Ludendorff. The propaganda directed against the Kaiser in the Entente countries has been so cunning and so systematic that the whole public opinion of these countries, including America, regards him as the very incorporation of all the real and invented atrocities of this war, and as the opponent of any restriction of the monarchical power. The Crown Prince is considered to have the same character as his father, and as regards Ludendorff, people are convinced that he has as much as ever the decisive control of policy, that he is only concerned to reverse the recent liberal development, and that his strength of character will never let him forego his influence on politics, so long as he has the command of the army in his hands. With these three men the Entente will never negotiate either armistice or peace.

The recent note is President Wilson's last word. If we do not fulfil the preliminary conditions which it puts, he will consider negotiations as broken off, and any attempt on our part to re-open them would be rejected or ignored.

The idea of summoning the people *en masse* to National Defence makes no impression on the enemy, who is well aware of the weakness of our military position. They know for instance that our oil supplies will only last a few months and cannot be renewed, since we shall be more and more cut off from Rumania. The complete collapse of our allies, who intend to conclude peace as soon as ever they can, and that without consulting us, is also well known to them. Nor is it any secret to them, that our reserves of man-power cannot last out much longer, now that every man who is anything like fit for active service has long ago been called up, and any further numerical increase of the army must be made at the expense of our industry, which needs these men just as much for the production of the indispensable munitions of war. America, on the other hand, is every week bringing up countless masses of men and material to the theatre of war, and their transport has become easier and easier as the power of our submarines to disturb transport by sea lessens.

A continuance of the war can only prolong the struggle for a few months, and every day would improve the Entente situation and worsen ours, even if we succeeded—which is not at all inconceivable—in holding a line for some time or in gaining some temporary successes.

It would be self-deception to hope that the course of the few months which we still have could bring a revulsion of feeling in France or England in favour of a peace of understanding. In both countries, particularly in France, the feelings of hate, of lust of revenge, and of conscious superiority, are too strong for any temporary check to the Entente advance to call forth a desire for peace. And here, even should the impossible be realized, America would prevent any conclusion of peace, should Germany now reject its conditions. ' We hold them ' [*sic*] (the French and English) said the American gentleman whom I have to thank for this information.

He also reminded me of the state of our public opinion at home. Should the war be prolonged, he said, then the able propagandists of the Entente would ensure the spreading through the length and breadth of people and army of the

idea, already only too prevalent among numberless Germans, that this last struggle was primarily concerned to save the person of the Kaiser—now the chief obstacle to peace. This would not only weaken the spirit of our last levies, but any such path would lead to an anarchy that would sweep away not only the Kaiser, but all the dynasties, and every kind of constitutional order whatever. I may add the statement of my American informant that should we fail to fulfil the demands of this last note of Wilson's, no conceivable new peace offer which we might make would stop the Entente invading Germany. We must picture to ourselves what this would mean.

My dear Max, it is with difficulty that I have brought myself to write things which must fill the heart of every German with pain and bitter indignation. I have done so, because the utterance which I have reproduced above comes from a man who, far from being led by a spirit of animosity to paint the situation as black as possible, has on the contrary for a long time been occupied, as is universally recognized, in trying to bring his countrymen to an understanding with us—who has suffered much unpleasantness and incurred many enmities in this cause. I thought it my duty to acquaint you with what I had heard from such a man. My second reason for writing is that I regard the black picture of our situation painted by the American as generally speaking correct. Herr von Keller and Major Draudt told me a few days ago on their return from Berlin that they had learned from authoritative military quarters that as a result of the ever-increasing shortage of material, etc., we were only in a position to carry on the war for a few more months. If this is correct, the complete collapse must follow automatically in a time which can be fairly exactly calculated, unless—and this was the only point which their informants in Berlin could advance in our favour—the few months which still lie before us should bring a revulsion of feeling in the Entente. I do not know what particular evidence there may be for hoping for such a revulsion, but if no such really tangible evidence is to be had, the calling-up of the last levies for a final struggle would simply be a gamble; then, should the hoped-for trump card not turn up, the game will lead to collapse, such as, I fear—perhaps after one last flare-up of war enthusiasm—may in Germany's present mood come sooner than one might expect. The undermining effect of war-deprivations and of the long years of want is not to be overlooked. From South Germany some really depressing

expressions of discontent are to be heard. But you are better informed on this point than I.

As far as my feeling goes, our national honour has been brilliantly satisfied in the heroic struggle of more than four years against the whole world. Now we stand alone, bleeding from a thousand wounds, deserted by our allies, hard-pressed by enemies, whose superiority grows daily. If we do not waste our last strength on a useless struggle, but try to secure our future, no one will ever reproach us for that. I have a firm belief in the future of Germandom; the world needs our ideals and our character; and as you emphasized in your splendid speech, the German people has been distinguished in the past by the magnificent recovery that it has made after times of the greatest disaster. If our Kaiser could bring himself now to take this most difficult decision for the sake of his people's future, no one would be able to interpret this as weakness, but on the contrary future generations in a Germany which by the grace of God has once more grown strong again, would approve an action which had been taken to avert the worst from his country and people.

You know far better than I do what our real prospects are . . . and in all the unspeakably painful events of this time my thoughts go with you, conscious as I am of the burden that is laid upon you and sure that the continual sacrifices which you have been called upon to make must bring their own blessing in the end.

I send these lines by the hand of Major Draudt, because I know that you have a high opinion of and the fullest confidence in him. I have asked him if possible to hand you the letter personally, as he is in a position to give verbally explanations which can make the situation clearer and portray it more vividly than anything I might write. Commander Mensing will accompany him to report further, should you require it, upon the sources of information which he has at his disposal. . . '

Here were the words of a man who was attached to the Kaiser, whose attitude to Ludendorff was one of trust and admiration, and who after the Reichstag's Peace Resolution had taken refuge in the ' Fatherland Party.'

The two officers, Draudt and Mensing, supported his every argument. They were convinced that they had penetrated to Wilson's inmost and noblest intentions. The menacing tone of the note was a cry to us to help him in his struggle for

the peace of justice. The struggle was a very hard one, but Wilson was the man to win it. They implored me to hasten the decision ; it might only be a question of days or even of hours, before Foch's armistice terms were decided upon.

Their visit caused me painful searchings of conscience. It is true, I had serious doubts as to the ' Informant's ' conclusions. In particular I was unshaken in my conviction that every evidence of military strength we could give would only strengthen Wilson's position against Foch, and not weaken it. But granted that Prince Hohenlohe was only right in the one point, that the abdication of the Kaiser would have the effect of mitigating the armistice conditions, then I was bound to reproach myself with a serious neglect of duty. While informing the Kaiser of the unfavourable interpretations of the Wilson note, I had carefully avoided giving any advice. Suppose the time for exerting influence on the armistice conditions was now past ! I could find no comfort even in the reports from Holland, which stuck obstinately to their assertion that Wilson would be content with the suppression of ' Kaiserism ' and did not demand that the Kaiser himself should abdicate. I resolved to make an attempt to bring light into the confusion of contradictory messages.

In one of the Scandinavian capitals there was at this moment a young American diplomat, who had been continually on visits to Germany up to the time of our breaking-off relations with the United States. I had spoken to him just before his last departure, and I had a vivid picture of the sorrow and disappointment which he felt, now that the declaration of the intensified submarine warfare had shattered the President's peace action. I knew that he had once gone to the limit of his instructions in order to bring Germany into touch with the Moderates in England. He had formerly shown understanding of our position ; but above all, he was led by the conviction that it was America's mission to bring about peace in time.

Thus he saw that a prolongation of the war till an annihilating victory should be gained would mean not only the

ruin of Europe, but the defeat of his own country, and especially of his President, whom he regarded as the Saviour of Humanity. The relations between this man and my immediate political associates had never been broken off. One could count on his agreeing to an open conversation. I therefore ordered Hahn to start northwards on 28th October to talk to this diplomatic personage on the night of the 28th-29th, and to report to me, if it was still possible, on the evening of the 29th. I would postpone my report to the Kaiser till then.

I found it difficult in the event to hold fast to this resolution.

. . . . . .

27th October had been a bad day ; we had never had such a feeling of being overwhelmed by misfortunes which were being continuously reported and prophesied in advance. Then Simons in the evening related to me the proceedings of a Cabinet meeting which could not fail to console and uplift me. Vienna had asked for bread ; it had sent a deputation to Berlin, which had proved that the population there was actually on the point of starving. Waldow believed that from the point of view of our food situation *we could not afford to hand over any supplies*. He feared a bad impression on German working-class circles ; he would not venture to decide as to the political considerations involved. We could at the outside help them out with 10,000 or 12,000 tons. That would last Vienna for perhaps four weeks, and we should certainly feel the want of it. Payer declared that we must take the responsibility for that as a matter of course. Scheidemann seconded him with the information that the Social Democratic party had approved of coming to the help of the Austrians in the matter of food, all votes but two being in favour. ' We can take the responsibility of this before the working classes,' he said. The Cabinet thereupon unanimously resolved that 10,000 to 12,000 tons of wheat should be handed over to Vienna and German Bohemia.

The witness of this event cannot be blotted out of history. Such an event carries weight of a different order from

Section 80 of the Versailles Treaty or the tactical considerations of over-subtle politicians. It was never so clear to me as that day that the German-Austrians and ourselves are *One People* and must become *One State*.

. . . . . .

On 28th October General von Chelius was announced on urgent business. He had arrived from Brussels to report to me. I received him in the afternoon. With all the signs of deep-seated agitation he said that he could not have remained in Brussels any longer ; he felt he had to speak to me on the question of the Kaiser's abdication. He laid before me a series of reports, which the head of the Governor-General of Belgium's Political Department had composed ; they were based on information received from an American confidant, who had up to then exactly predicted the contents of each one of President Wilson's notes. This man now declared with a confidence which was quite alarming that unless the Kaiser abdicated, the war would either go on, or Germany would have to expect terrible terms of armistice and as terrible a peace.

General von Chelius had been for many years First Aide-de-Camp to the Kaiser ; every word he said with regard to the Kaiser's position was the result of a struggle. But he insisted that His Majesty must make the great sacrifice to save dynasty and country.

I begged the General to go at once to the Comptroller of the Household, Count August Eulenburg, and through his mediation and if possible with his support, to lay this view before His Majesty. I held it of the highest importance that the Kaiser should hear the honourable solution proposed first of all from men whom he regarded as his personal friends and as the pillars of his throne.

Then the same day I had a conversation with the Court-Chaplain-General von Dryander, who had been on intimate terms with the Court for decades. I tried to convince him that he as the Kaiser's spiritual confidant and friend was the man to suggest to him the renunciation of the throne,

assuming he also shared my opinion that the interests of the monarchy demanded this sacrifice.

Herr von Dryander denied that his relations to the Kaiser were so close as to make him the natural channel for such a proposal—the idea of voluntary abdication itself at least did not meet with a point-blank rejection from him. He wanted to give my proposal one more thorough consideration.

On the same day the Cabinet at length heard the views of the other generals, to secure which we had been struggling so long.

Two Army Commanders appeared, to whose judgment particular weight had to be attributed, General von Gallwitz and General von Mudra. The former commanded a group of armies, the latter a single army ; both had proved their capacity in the war and had earned the confidence of their troops. General von Gallwitz had also won a great reputation in political circles at home, as the result of the acumen and the sense of justice which he had shown during the many years of his activity in the War Ministry.

They visited me before the meeting and spoke of the armistice offer and its terrible effect in a tone of reproach, as if the Government was to blame for it. I opened their eyes to the true state of affairs. They looked at each other in astonishment ; Ludendorff had never asked their opinion. The military information which they gave me led me inevitably to the conclusion : Summon the people to National Defence, but not now—only when the dishonouring conditions of armistice have been presented to us. The struggle that would then have to be waged would not be a hopeless one. If the Army Group of the Crown Prince Rupprecht were now to be taken back to the Meuse-Antwerp line, thus shortening the front, then there was a prospect that an obstinate resistance on our part might break the insolence of the enemy. In the course of this conversation no reference was made to the catastrophe to be expected in Austria ; but this formed the central theme of the meeting that followed.

The objectivity of the report,[1] which the generals made to the Cabinet was irresistible. In important details they took quite a different view from that of General Ludendorff on 17th October. In one important point they agreed with him. *This was, that the enemy were not doing their utmost to exploit their superiority to the full*, and that, too, although their generalship was now excellent. The French were noticeably weakening, their formations had shrunk; the English were numerically better off, but their aggressiveness had considerably diminished; the Americans were by no means to be despised as opponents,[2] but their aggressiveness had fallen off, too; still, after the replacement of their colossal losses, they would doubtless advance again to new attacks.

Both the Generals were of the opinion that the new offensive would be found to have cost the enemy dear, and that its result would have in the end a sobering effect on the present victorious frenzy of the Allies—if only we held out.

General von Gallwitz still believed that the heart of our troops was sound; it is true he did not consider them any longer capable of operations of an offensive nature, but decidedly capable of defence. Certainly an ugly temper, directed against any idea of fighting on had shown itself; and desertion had already assumed terrifying proportions, particularly in wood-fighting—'it is running into thousands.'

The armistice offer and the negotiations which followed it had had a bad effect ('Are we to let ourselves be knocked out at one minute to twelve?'). The situation of their relatives at home was depressing to the troops. Their morale on returning from leave was often worse than when they went.

General von Gallwitz implored us to counteract this demoralizing influence from home by a powerful appeal to the nation. But such an appeal must not be issued by the Kaiser alone. 'Wide circles of the army are willing to let

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 86.

[2] Cf. as against this Ludendorff's remark of 17th October, *vide supra*, p. 111.

the new Government do its share in coping with the situation.' General von Mudra, too, emphasized particularly the lack of reinforcements and the exhaustion of the army. ' If only the soldiers could once more have a sleep,' he said,— ' when the troops have continually to be put back out of rest into the line, it eats out the heart of a man.' The War Minister, General Scheüch, could hold out the prospect of having 300,000 of the promised 600,000 men ready at the beginning of November.

Haussmann put the question : ' Are the Generals of the opinion that we should break off the negotiations and organize the popular rising . . . or ought we not to break off until they have definitely put us dishonourable conditions ? ' Gallwitz replied : ' If we make such an appeal to the people, the breaking-off of the negotiations with Wilson will be necessary ; otherwise it will seem a mere farce. Besides in that case we should want to fight on enemy soil, and thus would have to take back our offer of evacuation. It is thus necessary to await Wilson's answer, and then to make preparations for fighting on, should dishonouring proposals be made.'

Gallwitz demanded precise information upon the situation in Austria. He wanted to distinguish between mere withdrawal and betrayal on the part of our allies. Would Austria feel itself compelled to allow the passage of enemy troops ? In any case Italian forces would be brought up to the Vosges front. This was very unfortunate, as our Vosges front was so thinly held. This might be the last straw which would break the camel's back.

Solf read the Austrian note which had already been published abroad. It contained the disloyal words : ' Without waiting for the result of any other negotiations.' He warned the Ministers against counting on anything other than Austria's unconditional capitulation.[1]

[1] The text of the request for an Armistice, addressed to Wilson by Austria on 27th October, 1918, ran as follows : ' In reply to President Wilson's note of 18th inst. addressed to the Austro-Hungarian Government, and in accordance with the President's decision to treat separately with Austria-Hungary upon the question of armistice and peace, the

The Generals were horrified. Gallwitz said that he found it hard to readjust himself to the sudden turn of events. It seemed for a moment as if he and Mudra regarded our cause as lost, if once the Entente had the disposal of the Austrian railways.[1]

But Gallwitz ' would not yet throw down his arms.' This was for the present all surmise, he said, we must first see how long we could still hold out. From the point of view of national honour we ought not to give up as long as our army was still capable of putting up a resistance. He turned to Scheidemann and demanded the co-operation of the Social Democrats in the work of National Defence, now that everything depended on tapping new sources of voluntary effort among the masses. ' It is the duty of the new men to do their part in influencing opinion at the front. That is what the Supreme Command believes it has a right to expect from the Social Democrats.'

Scheidemann replied: ' Just that was my reason for joining the present Cabinet.'

The Generals carried conviction. Haussmann summed up in their presence as follows: The point is, how can we make the best use of our remaining powers of resistance, *tactically* and *practically*, so as to get better terms. According to the exposé of the two Generals, there is still hope of holding our front, and of our being able to manage the retirement well. We are agreed that we shall be obliged

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Austro-Hungarian Government has the honour to declare its assent as well to the previous utterances of the President as to his conception of the rights of the various peoples of Austria-Hungary, in particular of the *Czecho-Slovaks* and of the *Jugoslavs*, outlined in his last note. Now that Austria-Hungary has thus accepted all the conditions regarded by the President as indispensable to the initiation of negotiations for an armistice and peace, there remains in the view of the Austro-Hungarian Government no further obstacle which should prevent the opening of such negotiations. The Austro-Hungarian Government therefore declares its readiness to enter into negotiations, without awaiting the result of other negotiations which may be in progress, for a peace between Austria-Hungary and the states which are at war with her, and for an immediate armistice on all fronts ; and it requests President Wilson to take the necessary steps to effect this.'

[1] *Amtliche Urkunden*, p. 217, Mudra : ' Should Austria capitulate unconditionally and side with the enemy, then our cause is lost.'

to finish up the war this winter ; only the present moment is not the time for doing so—with the enemy grown insolent, and confident of being able to dictate to us any terms he likes.

Even Scheidemann saw clearly that the struggle would have to go on for some time yet. It is true he did not expect any great material result from the contemplated appeal to the people ; he did not dispute the moral effect it would have, but declared the quality of the man-power which still could be disposed of to be poor. It would generally speaking be a case of taking out of the factories men who had already been at the front and therefore were not likely to be moved to enthusiasm by any such appeal. The worst thing in the situation was the collapse of Austria. Did not this make any further struggle hopeless ? Naturally we could not surrender at discretion, but if we succeeded through the negotiations with Wilson in reaching peace, then the Army Commanders ought to be content too.

Generals von Gallwitz and von Mudra left the meeting with ' anxious doubts.' They had detected a tone of resignation in Scheidemann's words. Gallwitz made a subsequent statement through Solf to the effect that he had at the time taken too black a view of the Austrian desertion, having momentarily overlooked the fact that we still had several armies at our disposal in the South and South-East. For this reason he no longer took the situation to be so desperate as he had then.

Before General von Gallwitz returned to the front, the suggestion was made to him from an influential quarter—as I heard afterwards—that he should set up a Dictatorship. The General rejected any such idea. It cannot have been any dislike of responsibility, that led him to do so. I believe that he was guided by a right feeling that in the situation we were then in a dictator would never have been capable of inspiring the masses with the enthusiasm which would bring them to follow him gladly ; and without this any popular rising would be a senseless fiasco. I am confirmed in this opinion by the words, which General von Gallwitz wrote a year later :[1]

[1] *Preussische Zeitung* of 2nd August, 1919.

' The precondition of any successful continuation of our resistance was that the Social Democratic leaders should have been willing and able to revive national feelings in the already misguided masses, and of spurring them on to willing effort.'

The Generals' report left us with a great burden of responsibility. The gist of it was the following : It depends on you whether the front holds or not. If, and only if it receives a moral impulse from home, will the army be able to stand up to the bad elements in its own ranks and hold out long enough to make the enemy rue his plan for Germany's annihilation. Thus it was the declaration of National Defence which was to bring salvation. But when was that to be issued ? Gallwitz shared my opinion as to the proper time for such a step. It must not be taken yet, but only after the publication of dishonourable armistice terms. The General had turned insistently to Scheidemann, just as Ludendorff had done, when he demanded on 17th October : ' Get hold of the people and get their heads up. Can't Herr Ebert do that ? '

In fact, the Social Democrats at that moment held the key to the situation, but their leaders felt the ground slipping from under them. Scheidemann now was obsessed by the very fear of Bolshevism which at the beginning of October he had still been inclined to ridicule as bourgeois hysterics. This very 28th October, after the Cabinet meeting, he and Drews urged the sharpest possible control of the Russian Embassy and its relations. Yes, and it was Scheidemann too who suggested that one of the Embassy mail cases should be made to go to pieces accidentally on the Silesian Station, and who made the proposal to stop the coal deliveries to Russia if necessary, as a means of pressure. The party Press daily sounded the alarm against Asiatic Socialism :

' But if your idea is to hammer Socialism into the German people, by means of dictatorship and the forcible suppression of opinion, then we are against you, since we know too well that for the workers to try and rule in Junker style would do Socialism no good.' [1]

[1] *Vorwaerts* of 27th October, 1918.

Thus, in the question of reform or revolution, the line between Independents and Majority was drawn with all desirable sharpness ; but it became blurred on the question of their attitude to the war.

In vain one looked for the words of passion, with which Stampfer in the *Vorwaerts* had at the beginning of October inveighed against the preposterous demands of the enemy. Things had gone so far that the Independents only needed to discover the effectiveness of some slogan or other against the war—and at once the *Vorwaerts* would adopt it, though its inner distaste and its efforts to tone down the expressions used were apparent to all. The fact was that Scheidemann and Ebert felt that they had to run after their own supporters to save them from giving way to Bolshevist seductions from the East.

On 28th October the *Vorwaerts* abandoned the cause of National Defence in the words :

> 'The German people, even if it comes unarmed to the Conference Table will be a factor to be reckoned with. . . . At the Conference Table, even if disarmed, we shall not be defenceless.'

That was the dangerous consolation which in Erzberger's mouth had horrified us at the Cabinet meeting of 26th October,[1] and had already had its influence on Ebert's speech of 22nd October.[2]

It is important to try and understand the situation of the Social Democratic party. While the army, through the inexorable claims of the daily struggle, had recovered from the armistice offer, the people at home had not. The home front was falling in, and people who were sinking in misery and ruin would not tolerate a return to their old state of hopelessness, now that peace had once appeared within their grasp.

In the same number of the *Vorwaerts* appeared an article by the artist Kaethe Kollwitz, whose great gifts had awakened the social conscience of many before the war. It was directed against Richard Dehmel. In the language of a poet

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 203. [2] *Vide supra*, p. 180.

he had in fact just made the same demand as had General Gallwitz—for a great voluntary sacrifice. He demanded that the exhausted and shaken should be sent home on leave, and all those who were ready to offer themselves be sent from home to replace them. ' The weakest body has miraculous powers, if inspired by a noble will,' was the conclusion of the invalid poet, who had just volunteered for the front once more. Kaethe Kollwitz appealed from Richard Dehmel to a greater : ' Seed-corn must not be milled,' ' Enough of death, not one man more must fall.' This was the overwhelming cry for peace, which in these days was welling up from the masses.

I was obliged to ask myself whether, should we publish a summons to national defence, our voice would reach far enough ? I still hoped for a revulsion of feeling, when the terrible conditions which the workers would not believe in arrived. Only one thing stood out menacingly, as I surveyed the crowded events of the day : Should we proclaim the ' Struggle of Desperation ' and the masses be able to answer us ' Yes, the terms are only as hard as they are because the Kaiser will not abdicate '—then the backbone of national defence would be broken.

But at Court the abdication did not seem to have even been considered. Late on 28th October, Wahnschaffe laid before me the text of the Decree which His Majesty wished should accompany the publication of the new Constitutional Laws :

> ' Enclosed I return to Your Grand Ducal Highness, for immediate publication, the draft Bills for the amendment of the Imperial Constitution and of the Law of the Chancellor's Deputies of 17th March, 1878, which had been laid before Me for promulgation. I have the desire to give expression to My feelings on the occasion of a step so significant for the future history of the German people. Prepared for by a series of governmental acts, a new order, in which fundamental rights will have been transferred from the Kaiser's Person to the people, has been established. This concludes a period which will be held in honour in the eyes of coming generations. In spite of all the conflicts between authority based on tradition

and the aspirations of new forces, this period has made possible for our people that tremendous development which manifested itself ineffaceably in the wonderful deeds of this war. In the terrible storms of the four war years, old moulds have been shattered and have not merely left a wreckage in their place, but have made way for new forms of life. After the experience of these times the German people may claim that no rights that might ensure it a free and happpy future, shall be denied it. To this conviction of Mine the proposals of the Federal Governments, which have been accepted and extended by the Reichstag, owe their origin. I, together with My August Confederates, give My assent to these resolutions of the Representative Assembly, in the firm will to do My best to co-operate in putting them into full execution, convinced that I am thereby furthering the welfare of the people. The Kaiser is now the Servant of the People.

May the new order thus release all the forces of good which our people needs to face the hard trials with which the Empire is beset, and to march with firm steps out of the darkness of the present to win itself a bright future.

WILHELM, I.R.'

BERLIN, *28th October*, 1918.

This manifesto could only be intended as an answer to the clamorous demands for his abdication, which could be heard from all sides—an answer that proclaimed: 'I am going to stay at my post and co-operate loyally with the Government.'

Opinions differed as to the advisability of publishing this document. Erzberger was for publication on the same evening; he was seconded by Wahnschaffe. Roedern feared comparisons between past and present. Friedberg suggested that the less well-disposed would say the Kaiser was protesting convictions which he did not feel. Payer, too, warned us against drawing public attention to the Kaiser's person. The prevalent opinion was that at the moment publication had better be avoided.

I still had the feeling that the last hope for the Kaiser lay in maintaining a close reserve. I also said to myself that should it come to an abdication, it would be easier to preserve an appearance of dignity and free choice

if this last attempt of His Majesty to reconcile public opinion to his remaining on the throne should not become known.

Eagerly I awaited news from von Chelius. He was thoroughly familiar with the entourage which he had to bring to reason. Dryander had written in the course of the day, refusing to undertake a mission which was not warranted by his own convictions. Late in the evening I received another refusal, from Count August Eulenburg :

'BERLIN,
28th October, 1918.

YOUR GRAND DUCAL HIGHNESS,

I return enclosed the letter of Prince Hohenlohe, handed me by General von Chelius, with the respectful request, that Your Highness may think fit to submit this letter to His Majesty the Kaiser for the information of His August Person, *privately*, and without making any particular proposal with regard to it. I would further suggest that the news brought by General von Chelius from Brussels should also be imparted by Your Highness to His Majesty privately.

If Your Grand Ducal Highness should see fit to try to influence His Majesty in the sense of these papers, such documentary support will be absolutely necessary. Otherwise you would only keep getting the answer, that a soldier ought not to leave his post in the moment of danger, and that—even if the sacrifice demanded should be made " voluntarily "—there would be no guarantee of the desired easy peace.

I do not believe that any attempt to secure an abdication could be successful, unless there were a considerable degree of certainty as to the price the Entente were prepared to pay.'

On 29th October Herr von Chelius was once more announced. He at once declared that the Kaiser ought not under any circumstances to abdicate ; that would mean the dissolution of army and Empire. I asked him to explain this complete change of attitude, whereupon he replied that he had yesterday been a victim of my suggestive influence and had not expressed his real opinion. I could only respond to this extraordinary explanation with the question, whether it had been he or I that had come from Brussels to Berlin to

demand the Kaiser's abdication as Germany's last hope, and to support this demand with documents specially brought for the purpose !

Thus I had met with a refusal from Dryander, Eulenburg and Chelius ; while the reports which had been laid before the Kaiser without comment had not led him to draw the expected conclusions.

To whom could I now turn, who would be willing and fitted to speak to the Kaiser as a friend ? I knew of no one in Berlin. I was obliged to admit that the whole path I had till then taken could not lead to its goal, because it had been too cautious and too considerate. The ' Free Decision ' would not mature.

I must go to the Kaiser myself. I was now, on 29th October, clear on that point. But Count Eulenburg had been right in warning me against trying to base the decision on vague messages from abroad. I felt I ought to wait for the report from the North.

Then about 5 p.m. Freiherr von Gruenau appeared in my room with the news : ' His Majesty leaves for Spa to-day.' I asked him if this was a bad joke. Gruenau replied, that he had heard nothing till half an hour ago, when Major Niemann had rung him up in Berlin to say that the Kaiser was leaving the same evening for Headquarters, and that he, Gruenau, was to accompany him. Gruenau had at once asked Major Niemann whether the Chancellor had been informed and whether he approved of such a journey at that moment. He warned him that such a sudden departure would excite public opinion and would be taken to mean that the Kaiser was taking refuge with the army. Major Niemann had answered that Field-Marshal von Hindenburg regarded it as of extreme importance, after the political events of the last few weeks, to bring the Kaiser once more into touch with the army : as a matter of fact only quite a short stay was intended and after four or five days His Majesty would be once more in Potsdam.

I at once sent Herr Solf to Count Eulenburg, the Comptroller of the Household, and to von Delbrueck, the head of

the Civil Cabinet, with the request for their support in my efforts to prevent the journey.

At the same time I asked the Minister of War to come to the telephone ; he had not heard anything of His Majesty's intention up to then. Freiherr Marschall, the head of the Military Cabinet, happened to be with him, and confirmed and explained the news. Scheüch tried to reassure me ; if the Kaiser only stayed away three days, it would probably do no harm. I replied that I did not believe in the three days ; if the Kaiser once went off, I was very much afraid that he would never come back again. I later on heard that the War Minister at once expressed to Marschall the grave objections which he felt. Marschall replied that in the changed military situation the army was desirous of seeing the Kaiser, and that the Supreme Command also urgently desired His Majesty's presence at Headquarters on account of the decisions made necessary by our retreat. Scheüch emphasized the fact that the decisions to be taken in Berlin required just as much that the Kaiser should be in immediate touch with the Government. He exacted an assurance that the Kaiser would return immediately.

I thought at the time that the War Minister underestimated the speed with which events might develop.

I had myself put into telephone connection with His Majesty, and told him how painfully surprised I was at this new decision and at its being taken so suddenly and without my knowledge. The Kaiser replied that in war sudden decisions are taken, that the Supreme Command desired his presence at the front, that the Kaiserin had also been taken by surprise. I urgently begged for a postponement of the journey, which at the moment must make the worst possible impression. Questions of the greatest importance would have to be settled in the next few days—questions, which we could not possibly settle on the telephone. The Kaiser said to me : ' Now you have got rid of Ludendorff, I must install Groener.' I replied that the Field-Marshal could easily do all that by himself ; I begged for a personal audience. The Kaiser appealed to his doctors, who feared infection

from my influenza—' and anyhow you must take care of your health,' he said. I begged in spite of all that to be allowed to come out to Potsdam. His Majesty refused. There was no personal animus in his tone. I tried once more : ' We are now entering on the most difficult time of all ; at such a time Your Majesty cannot be absent,' I said. The Kaiser parried : ' If you do all I have told you to do, all may still be well.' This remark referred to a note which His Majesty had addressed to Solf, advising us to make a change of front in our foreign policy, and from now on to base the peace action on England.

In the course of our telephone conversation I was several times on the point of asking for leave to resign. I did not do so, feeling that the time had not yet come. I did not want to use up my last means of pressure—after all I had already threatened resignation twice within a week.

The same evening, 29th October, I received, the following telegram from the Kaiser :

' New Palace,
29th October, 1918.

To the Chancellor, Berlin,

As to-morrow important conversations take place at Spa, in which among other things the question of Ludendorff's successor will be discussed, I am going there. I am also going to thank My brave troops in the name of the Fatherland for their superhuman efforts, since it is to them that My duty which directs Me at a time of crisis. To make the situation easier for you, Ludendorff has had to go. His going is from a military point of view a severe loss to the army. It is My duty to make good this loss ; and it is necessary for Me to introduce his successor ; that is why I am leaving this evening. To-day calm reigned over the whole front. You have presumably received My proposal with regard to England.

WILHELM.'

At the time I could only suppose that the Supreme Command had engineered the removal of the Kaiser from Berlin. I regarded it as a disloyal attempt to withdraw the Kaiser out of range of my advice. To-day I know that in this I did the Supreme Command an injustice. Gruenau and Scheüch

were both of them falsely informed. It is now certain from the documentary evidence that it was not the Supreme Command which suggested the Kaiser's journey. On the contrary, Spa was also quite taken by surprise, and asked for the reasons of the move. General Groener received the explanation which Major Niemann too alleges having been given by Marschall, viz., that the War Minister Scheüch had declared he could no longer answer for the Kaiser's safety, if he stayed in Potsdam. Somewhere here pure invention had been at work.[1] The War Minister had never spoken in this sense ; this fact was later corroborated by Freiherr Marschall. The War Minister had never approved of the Kaiser's journey, he only in the end reconciled himself to the accomplished fact.

To sum up : the Chancellor, Herr von Gruenau and the War Minister were all informed that the Supreme Command demanded the presence of the Kaiser at the front on military grounds. General Groener, on the other hand, was told that the War Minister could not be answerable for His Majesty's safety. Both of these statements were without any foundation in fact. To-day there can only be one explanation ; the plan was carefully prepared and hastily put into execution by someone who was bent on removing the Kaiser from Berlin. My efforts to induce Dryander, Count Eulenburg and Herr von Chelius to break through the mists that enveloped the Kaiser had failed, but had presumably left no doubt with the Kaiser's immediate entourage as to my position on the abdication question. They must have known that it could only be a question of hours, or at the most days, before His Majesty was confronted with a decisive step on my part.

[1] Statement of Lieutenant Colonel Niemann in *Der Tag*, No. 201, of 30th May 1922 : ' My article in No. 195 of *Der Tag* contains the sentence : " The War Minister declares to the head of the Military Cabinet that he can take no responsibility for the safety of the Kaiser, while he is in Potsdam." Lieutenant-General Scheüch, the War Minister of the time, had pointed out to me that there has evidently been some misunderstanding on my part. General Scheüch never made this nor any similar statement ; this fact is confirmed by General Freiherr von Marschall.'

CHAPTER X

THE ALTERNATIVES: ABDICATION—OR ABANDONMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

On the evening of 29th October I received a letter from Scheidemann,[1] in which he made the demand—'Not to be communicated to the Press,'—that the Chancellor should advise His Majesty the Kaiser to renounce the throne. It was 'supported' by an argument which was obviously inspired by the 'information from Switzerland':

> 'There can be no doubt of the conviction in the minds of the great majority of the population of the German Empire that the prospects of obtaining an armistice and peace on tolerable conditions are lessened by the Kaiser's remaining in his high office. Should the Kaiser remain and an unfavourable peace be concluded, both he and the Government will later on be exposed to the charge that they preferred to let the people suffer serious disadvantage rather than draw from the given situation the consequences necessary for the whole people.
>
> There can further be no doubt that the peace negotiations have considerably better prospects if the change of system is made evident to all at home and abroad by means of a change in the First Rank of the Empire. The whole political situation suggests that the step here proposed can only be delayed, not avoided. Thus it will be better for the Kaiser now to draw as soon as possible from the total situation the consequences which in the view of numerous German statesmen must be drawn.'

Thus on the same day my policy received a check from the Kaiser and from my Social Democratic colleagues. I aimed at the splendid gesture; and how was the Kaiser to examine the situation with the necessary ruthless disregard of self in the atmosphere of Headquarters, and how could he, or

[1] Cf. Scheidemann, *op. cit.* p. 201 f. The letter there given is erroneously dated 20th October, 1918.

even I, act freely when Scheidemann was pressing for the abdication.

I asked him to come to me next morning and told him that I had informed the Kaiser as to opinion at home and abroad. I went so far as to tell him that I had spoken to the head of the Civil Cabinet, Herr von Delbrueck, on the point; but I made it clear to him that my efforts must at once come to a standstill if he and his party tried to put pressure on me, and asked him therefore to take back his letter.

Scheidemann denied that he had spoken only in the name of his own party, and said there were political personalities of all shades of opinion who to-day took the same view. He appealed to various elder statesmen, and professed to know that the Kaiser's abdication had been demanded by one of the Federal Princes.

It was clear to me that the withdrawal of the letter, to which Scheidemann was in the end willing to consent, was a mere formality and at best only gave me a certain breathing space; sooner or later the demand for the Kaiser's abdication must be made officially by the Social Democratic Party.

On the same morning my envoy reported to me on his journey to the North. He had succeeded in bringing about a conversation with two American diplomats and with our minister in Copenhagen as well. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's opinion had the greatest weight for me. It seemed to him questionable whether the international situation would be improved by the abdication of the Kaiser. In his view conditions at home were decisive; the German people would not be able to put up a resistance against dishonourable armistice terms if the Kaiser's abdication were delayed.

The essential points of the report of the conversation with the two American diplomats were the following:

1. 'Wilson is sticking to his peace of justice and is "fighting an uphill battle" against the chauvinists of the Entente who are now at the helm in England and in France. Chauvinism is also the predominant force in American public opinion.

2. Both X and Y thought it possible that the subordination of the military authorities, and the dismissal of Ludendorff

would have convinced Wilson personally of the genuineness and permanence of the " Democratization " ; but they declared that in all probability his personal conviction would no longer suffice to impose his point of view with regard to the armistice conditions on the others. The peace conditions would be a different matter.

3. Foch is to-day even in America as great a man as Wilson. Wilson could certainly dispose of the *jusqu'au boutistes* [*sic*] but between the War and Peace parties there are the Moderates who need clearer proofs of German democracy if they are to fall into line with Wilson.

4. Such a clear proof would be the abdication of the Kaiser and the renunciation of the throne by the Crown Prince. . . .

5. X. and Y. argued . . . as follows :

(*a*) *The German army is still a powerful weapon.*

(*b*) The Kaiser is not a harmless cipher . . . but a strong personality with a very distinctive history.

(*c*) Who can guarantee that he and his faithful adherents will not suddenly reverse everything that has been done, when once the dangers of the war are past ? In the eyes of hundreds of thousands the Kaiser and the Crown Prince are the embodiment of all that is hateful and of all that is dangerous in Germany.

6. I now put the following question to X : Let us suppose that the sensational democratic events had been brought off and that Wilson was still unsuccessful in enforcing his point of view in the armistice terms, so that terms were put to us which we could in part accept and in part must reject—what would happen then ? The answer was that the position of the chauvinistic Governments in the face of their peoples would then be precarious. When I said that I believed the continuation of the war would then involve considerable risks for Clemenceau and Lloyd George, this statement, too, was confirmed by X.

7. I suggested that it was an ugly thing for a people to drop its Kaiser for the sake of peace, and got the reply : " There is nothing ugly about it, it is only logical. If the new system is genuine it is inconceivable that the Kaiser with his temperament could put up with it."

8. X treated the immediate publication of the armistice terms as a possibility. On the other hand it seemed to him likely that Allied agreement on the terms would be further delayed in consequence of the great differences of opinion there were.

9. He suggested that our public declarations might go in for rather more " punch " [*sic*].

10. X said our armistice offer was a mistake, as it had meant encouraging the enemy chauvinists.

11. X twice advised us to answer the armistice conditions with a counter question as to whether the Allies accepted the Wilson conditions as the basis of peace.

12. X declared that Wilson had strong forces on his side both in England and in France. The Bolshevik danger in Italy and in France was serious.

I further put the following questions to X :

Supposing Germany brings about a situation such as makes clear to the enemy peoples that :

They are no longer fighting for Alsace-Lorraine ; they can have that.

They are no longer fighting against Kaiserism ; it has been eliminated.

They are no longer fighting for the League of Nations ; we have accepted it.

They are no longer fighting for Palestine or Mesopotamia ; they have them already.

But that :

Thousands more must die in order that French and English troops may take their revenge on German soil.

Do you believe that their peoples would then persist in the continuation of the war ?

The answer was a very decisive " No."

The conversation concluded with the appeal :

" For God's sake, do something to make Wilson strong against the Entente militarists, who are in power in France and England " [*sic*].

He would easily be able to dispose of the American jingoes after the abdication of Kaiser and Crown Prince. . . .'

This reconnaissance in the North was intended to determine whether the Kaiser's abdication could improve the terms of armistice. The information which I received admitted of only one interpretation : The conditions in all their severity have already been agreed on ; and revision of them is only to be expected if we can muster up the will for the ' struggle of desperation.' But we shall not be fit for this struggle unless Kaiser and Crown Prince renounce their rights. If on the other hand *after the abdication* the con-

tinuation is forced upon a Germany resolute to the uttermost, this would render the war decidedly more difficult if not impossible for the enemy, who would have lost his most effective propaganda cry.

Then I realized with horror the extent of the mistake I had yesterday made in not compelling the Kaiser to remain in Berlin, cost what it might. If the abdication was to have any healing power it must take place soon enough and take a form calculated to arouse feelings of gratitude. The time for the ' splendid gesture ' was past after Scheidemann's letter. But I could still save the appearance of free choice. My colleagues hesitated, only Solf realized the situation as clearly as Count Rantzau had done. The majority hoped to avoid the renunciation of the throne. The indecision of the Cabinet gave the Kaiser one more chance of proving that he recognized where the national necessity lay better than did the Parliamentary Government. But we had at the most a respite of a few days. I tried to make good my fatal omission in the following telegram :

' BERLIN,
30*th October*, 1918.

The public is disquieted by rumours of an intended military action against the established popular Government.

Your Majesty's journey to Headquarters will soon become known and will, as I have cause to fear, but give fresh food to these rumours ; it will give the impression of a disagreement with the policy of the new Imperial Government. Nothing that we could publish would counteract this impression.

In addition to this the enemy's armistice conditions, which we expect hourly, as well as the difficult questions of the transition period at home, require the presence of the Monarch for conversations which must be direct and which admit of no delay.

Under these circumstances I see no possibility of fulfilling the task I undertook with my Chancellorship of bringing peace at home and abroad, in the absence of Your Majesty.

I thus most humbly beg Your Majesty to return as soon as possible. I do not think I could answer for an absence extended beyond Thursday ; we may every hour be placed before decisions on which Germany's fate depends and which

can only be taken through the co-operation of Crown, Chancellor and Government. I myself could not possibly in this situation leave Berlin.'

I received the following answer :

'ROYAL TRAIN,
31*st October*, 1918.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, 30*th October*.

His Majesty has instructed me to reply to your Grand Ducal Highness's telegram of to-day (No. 15 to Freiherr von Gruenau) that His Majesty has undertaken the journey to General Headquarters because urgent military affairs closely connected with the armistice and peace make His August Presence here indispensable. His Majesty does not intend to remain here any longer than necessary. Any rumours there may be with regard to an intended military reaction against the popular Government outflank (*sic*) all actual observations. Your Grand Ducal Highness is well aware that His Majesty has several times had the intention of declaring publicly His adherence to the reforms in the sphere of internal policy, and that publications in this sense have been held up against his express will and contrary to the wish of the parliamentary members of the so-called War-Cabinet. His Majesty has instructed me to recommend once more such publication. A new draft in this sense will be submitted to the Chancellor by Geheimrat von Dryander.

VON DELBRUECK.'

This ungracious reply was the expression of deep displeasure and offence. From this moment onwards the signs of the Imperial ill-humour increased daily—even the very first news left no room for doubt that the Kaiser from the time of his leaving Berlin saw in me nothing but his adversary and entirely misunderstood my intentions. That was a very hard blow to me personally, and no less to the cause to which I was committed. I had been familiar with the Kaiser for many years. In venturing to take on the Chancellorship I had built upon His Majesty's confidence in me ; this had survived even the year 1912, in which I had had to overcome opposition in the course of difficult negotiations. Since taking office I had experienced nothing but good will and friendliness on his part, and beyond that, a heroic readiness

to see things objectively. It was not without justice that his entourage feared that the Kaiser ' on the ground of a single person's report might bring himself without further ado to accede to this request.' [1] I felt one of the foundations of my Chancellorship give way. I became aware for the first time that I had had all the time one last consolation in reserve without being conscious of it—that if all attempts to enlighten him while sparing his feelings should fail, then I would go myself to the Kaiser and he would see in me no mere Chancellor of a democratic Government but the friend and relative concerned to save the House of Hohenzollern from collapse. And now the Kaiser had hardened his heart against me, withdrawn himself and entrenched himself against me. I thus looked for allies who stood as near to him as or nearer than I did. I telegraphed on the same 30th October to the Grand Duke of Hesse and asked for his personal help.

The Kaiser's journey met with less discussion from the public than I had expected. Only the suspicion remained that the decision had been motived by a determination not to renounce the throne, and thus the agitation for the abdication grew more intense.

The *Vorwaerts* dropped all reserve. Under the title ' What will the Kaiser do ? ' this paper wrote on 31st October:

> ' It would be senseless for the columns of the Press to keep silence on a matter which is all the talk of the street and the market-place. A few days ago the rumour was universal that the Kaiser and the Crown Prince had renounced the throne. When this rumour was not confirmed it was generally assumed that it must have been in advance of the facts. Since then it is impossible for any editorial staff or for any person who is supposed to have any sources of information at his command to save himself from the perpetual questions with their continually repeated " Already ? " and " When ? " . . . Nothing can still the whisperings and the mutterings of the people : " What will the Kaiser do ? When will he do it ? "
>
> It might be described as a noiseless stirring which is going through all ranks of the people. Anyone who imagines that

[1] From the letter which I received at this time from a well-informed quarter.

he can do anything here with the old antithesis of " Order " and " Revolution," of " Monarchy " and " Republic " is making a big mistake. On this question there hardly are any differences of opinion of note, and if there are they do not in any way fall along party lines.'

This was no longer the case. A week ago the Kaiser's abdication had been demanded by prominent persons on the Conservative side in the hopes of saving the monarchy. Since Noske's speech and the *Frankfurter Zeitung's* action the Right had felt themselves in honour bound to demonstrate for the Monarch. The Conservative party in the Prussian House of Lords had on 26th October moved a resolution to the following effect :

' Even in the darkest of days the King of Prussia will find his people loyal. The House of Lords in remembrance of its own past will at all times stand as a bulwark before the Throne of its Hereditary Ruler.' [1]

Fine and natural as the sentiments which gave rise to this manifesto were in themselves, Haussmann was not entirely unjustified in warning us against such ' bearish friendliness.' In fact, the Left Press only became more violent in its demand for the abdication. Thus a situation was produced among the public which removed the question of abdication out of the sphere of statesmanlike calculation into that of partisan sentiment and which was bound to sting the Right to the quick. But when I considered whose feelings we were at this moment in a position to hurt, those of the Right or of the Left, I was mercilessly led to the sober conclusion, that the millions standing behind the Conservative party would fight on however much their feelings might be wounded, while it was to be expected that the masses would sabotage the war if we no longer possessed their good will.

One thing was now clear to me—that the decision could not await the Kaiser's return. The insistency of the demands increased almost from hour to hour and rendered His Majesty's decision more difficult. It would depend on the Social Democrats how many days we still had. When

[1] Westarp, *op. cit.* January number, 1922, p. 185.

would they take an official step which could no longer be kept from the public? This question was like a nightmare robbing me of sleep. I resolved if it were anyhow possible to bind Scheidemann before the Cabinet not to exert any further pressure upon me—in the feeling that he had only taken back his letter out of a sympathetic consideration for me in my personal situation.

The meeting of 31st October was the first at which I was again present. I opened it with the following declaration:

> 'I have been considering the question of His Majesty the Kaiser's abdication without intermission for days. Confidants of His Majesty have been with me and I have discussed the question thoroughly with them. I have given them such material as would enable them to inform His Majesty as to the situation at home and abroad. I shall see that this process of information goes on.
>
> But I declare expressly that any abdication of His Majesty the Kaiser can only and ought only to take place of his own free will. Only so can damage to Empire and army be avoided, only so can Germany's dignity be preserved. I can only take action in the matter if my freedom is not impaired and if all attempts to exert pressure on me are avoided.'

Herr Scheidemann was visibly taken aback; he declared that the mention of the Kaiser question had taken him by surprise and that anything he might say on it would therefore be unprepared:

> 'The situation has got considerably worse in about the last fourteen days,—especially the morale of the army. This gets worse and worse the further back from the front the troops are stationed. Then there is the desertion of our allies. The world is looking around to find a scapegoat for all the mischief that has been done. Here public opinion clutches at various utterances which the Kaiser made in former days and which have stuck in the public memory. The effect of these utterances on opinion at home is universal, and leads to attacks on His Majesty's person which are growing more and more violent. It would be true to say that among the middle classes and the peasants not a single person has been found to champion the Kaiser; while our workers are convinced that we shall not get any peace such as will allow our people the chance of

further development, until Kaiserism is done with once and for all.

We have always tried to read into Wilson's notes our view that the President is not demanding the Kaiser's abdication. But the Foreign Office will corroborate me when I say that all foreign countries interpret them otherwise. They believe that Wilson intends to say : " You will get a better peace when once the Kaiser has been got rid of." Should the conditions be such that we cannot accept them and so must defend ourselves to the uttermost, then too, we can only carry on such a desperate struggle if the Kaiser is out of the way.

Thus it is an imperative duty for us to suggest to the Kaiser that he should take the step voluntarily. I should not like the Kaiser to be forced into playing an undignified part. It would for instance have been undignified had the Kaiser published the Order which was to have been laid before him on the occasion of the constitutional reforms. Its language was fine enough in itself but did not correspond to the Kaiser's real nature. Nor was it dignified of us to let ourselves be driven under Wilson's lash to make constitutional changes which we ought to have long ago made of our own free will. It would be equally undignified for the Kaiser to abdicate because the people through strikes and riots has driven him to do so. All that will come. Our Press has been very reserved ; the one exception only proves the rule—I refer to the *Magdeburger Volksblatt*. It cannot now be kept in hand any longer. The *Vorwaerts* of to-day has published an article which is already clear enough although keeping within the four corners of the censorship regulations. A clever journalist can always manage, without making any definite demand, to let people see what he wants.

I am entirely in agreement with what the Chancellor has said. We ought not to exert any pressure on the Kaiser—even the Cabinet ought not—but we ought to see that he is advised. Nor must we let the Cabinet go to pieces.

In declaring it historically necessary that the Kaiser should go I do not intend to threaten my resignation if he does not. Before saying anything of the kind I should have to discuss the matter with my friends of the party which I here represent.

But let us make no mistake, this demand did not originate among the workers but in middle-class circles, especially in South Germany, where the particularist movement is growing. In Bavaria the cry is : " Cut loose from Prussia ! Join up with German-Austria ! Leave the Empire ! " That would be the

worst fate which could befall us. The Empire must be maintained in all its greatness and power with a united people who realize what their country means to them.

The peasants, too, especially in South Germany, are for the Kaiser's abdication; all the news to the contrary is false. And the most surprising thing for me has been the attitude of the officials. I had never thought it possible for these people to change round so easily.

Quite a number of officers even have been with me and have expressed the same opinion. They were officers of all ranks up to and including that of Colonel. It was very disagreeable to them all to have to say so but they felt themselves bound to declare that the Country was more to them than the Kaiser.

And they were right. If the interests of the Country and of the people require it, one must be prepared to override feelings for which I have the greatest respect. This is also to act in the interest of the Kaiser himself and of his name in history. He must draw the consequences of defeat and withdraw voluntarily.'

I passed over the remark of ill-omen: 'Before I say anything of the kind (*i.e.*, threaten resignation from the Cabinet) I should have to discuss the matter with my friends of my own party,' and expressed my satisfaction at Scheidemann's statement that he did not want to break up the Cabinet. I had then to leave the meeting to talk with the Grand Duke of Hesse who had arrived from Darmstadt sooner than I expected.

The debate went on in my absence under the chairmanship of Herr von Payer.[1] He brought the discussion on to the right track in pointing out that in this matter we could not pass resolutions as a body but only express individual opinion for the consideration of the Chancellor. In his opinion a solution was only to be found in the voluntary retirement of His Majesty—in a retirement which must be uninfluenced by pressure from at home or abroad. Up to the last Sunday he had expected to be able to spare the Kaiser this step. The situation must be clearly laid before him. This was a necessary consequence of the confidence which they ought to feel in the Kaiser, in his environment and also in the

[1] Cf. Payer, *op. cit.* pp. 148 ff.

Imperial Chancellor. The Chancellor ought not to be faced by a unanimous vote of the Cabinet either ; he, too, must not be subjected to the least pressure.

Two representatives of the Centre took up a strong line against the abdication, particularly at the present moment. Erzberger's view was inconsequent enough ; he suggested any abdication that was not *voluntary* would be worthless and yet recommended just as Eulenburg had done that the Kaiser should rather await the conditions and then be driven by the enemy powers to take this step—the abdication forced by the enemy on King Constantine of Greece had not been undignified.

Groeber disputed Herr Scheidemann's statement that not a voice had been found to champion the Kaiser, and referred to various meetings and resolutions of the Centre Party. It was clear to him that Wilson did not demand the abdication. The Kaiser's abdication involved renunciation of the throne by the Crown Prince ; thus a child would come to the throne, and ' Woe to the people who have a child king.' He personally was monarchist to the core and would draw the consequences of his convictions. But grounds of policy spoke also against the step. If the Kaiser went the Government must go too, and then there would be anarchy. Seditious elements were there in plenty. The gifted and personally attractive leader of the Centre spoke with a fine indignation and made an obvious impression.

Trimborn was of a contrary opinion to that of his two party associates. ' My observations lead me to confirm what Herr Scheidemann has said about public opinion and about the officials.' He too was convinced that ' the Crown Prince was out of the question.'

Haussmann opposed Erzberger and Groeber. It was illogical, he said, to pretend that only a voluntary abdication had any value and then to wait till the Entente put such hard conditions that the Kaiser would be obliged to abdicate. In that case the abdication would not only no longer be voluntary in the eyes of foreign countries but the Kaiser would also lose all right to expect any gratitude from his own

people. At the present time the abdication would be a great sacrifice made to the people for the sake of securing a favourable peace ; the feelings of gratitude for this sacrifice would be stronger than the disorders which it was feared would result. An abdication as the result of hard conditions would put the Government in an impossible position. If the Kaiser and King found the conditions so hard that rather than accept them he preferred to give up his throne, was the Government then to accept them ? What prospects did people suppose would any final struggle have then ? If the step were made it must be made before the terms were known.

Friedberg took Groeber's side : He thought that the appearance of a voluntary abdication could no longer be kept up. It must be admitted that after the arrival of hard conditions the anger of the people would be turned against the Kaiser. But all might then turn out well if the Kaiser went to the front and continued in person the struggle against such conditions. ' We ought not to be in too much of a hurry.'

Scheidemann warned them against letting it come to a struggle at home. Such a struggle would not stop at the person of the Kaiser. He would answer Friedberg's ' Not too much of a hurry ' with ' Not too late.' Anyone who wants to save the Monarchy as an institution must act at once. In reply to Groeber he emphasized the fact that the Kaiser's grandson must grow up in a democratic atmosphere and would ascend the throne under different circumstances from those of his father and grandfather.

General Scheüch protested that the abdication was and would always be the effect of compulsion. The army had grown up with the Supreme War Lord and if he were to be torn from it—that would be the end of all things.

Erzberger got more and more violent in his opposition to the abdication. ' A Swiss told me yesterday,' he said, ' that if Germany drove away its Kaiser, opinion abroad would be inclined to say : " The Germans are brutal conquerors and despicable when conquered " ; if we are going to barter

the Kaiser for profit, he will be quite right. . . . The German diplomat who asked Cardinal Mercier whether the Kaiser ought to abdicate should be hanged, and even if the Cardinal mentioned it spontaneously without the diplomat protesting, he still ought to be hanged. . . . Even the English are afraid that the result of the Kaiser's abdication will be Bolshevism in Germany.'

Herr von Payer persisted that the Kaiser must go now, otherwise we should find ourselves in a desperate position on the arrival of the conditions. ' They are sure to be hard,' he said, ' and if so, people will look round for the guilty man. The movement cannot be regarded as the product of the Press. It springs from the national feeling that someone ought to be made responsible. Should this feeling break loose, it will sweep the Kaiser away and then turn against the Dynasty. The proposal that the Kaiser should abdicate subsequently after first undertaking to lead the army in the final struggle is quite impracticable.'

The Prussian Minister Drews then expressed himself in the most decisive terms. He only saw the inner situation. An immediate abdication was necessary. Were the hard conditions accepted, abdication would certainly make no further difference. If they were not accepted and the struggle had to go on, how could the King put himself at the head of his people ? He was unfortunately quite convinced that the people would not fight for their King and against peace. This must be made clear to the Monarch and he must then give way. Otherwise the present majority would break up and there would ensue a chaos worse than the worst of conditions.

Haussmann admitted that in the case of abdication we must reckon with disorders, but if the Kaiser refused to abdicate, disorders would come all the more surely.

Solf then gave a very copious account of the interpretations which Wilson's notes had met with abroad. But when Friedberg declared that his material was not conclusive enough to serve as a basis for advising abdication, the Foreign Minister fell back on public opinion at home and

professed to have heard from a reliable source that one of the principal founders of the ' Fatherland Party ' had stated that he could not imagine how the continued existence of Germany was possible without the Kaiser's abdication.

Thus the different views of the Cabinet seemed irreconcilable. Still even the opponents of the step went on to discuss the legal situation to which the Kaiser's abdication would give rise. In the Imperial Constitution there was no provision for a Regency. The Prussian Constitution laid it down that that relative of age in the male line who stood next to the Crown should assume the Regency and summon the two Chambers to pass a resolution as to the necessity of a Regency—a resolution which, however, had only confirmatory and not constituent force. Was the rule of such a Prussian Regent to extend automatically to the Empire ? Here legal opinions differed. Some of the lawyers were of the opinion that an Emergency Law would be necessary ; but the majority did not doubt that the Regency in the Empire and in Prussia must coincide even according to existing law, since the connection of the Imperial Rights with the Crown of Prussia was laid down in the Constitution. A simpler solution was recommended by Herr Trimborn, who based himself on the view of Herr Schulz, the eminent legal adviser to the Ministry of the Interior.

This was to set up not a Regency but a Deputyship, both in the Empire and in Prussia. He appealed as precedent to the occasion when the Crown Prince had acted as Deputy to the old Kaiser after Nobiling's attempt on his life. Should the Kaiser merely resign in favour of a Deputy all difficulties of the Landtag, the swearing-in of officials, and the Regency would be got over. It was a very elegant solution from a legislative point of view ; unfortunately from a practical point of view it would not go far enough.

Erzberger declared this way out to be impossible and impracticable in Constitutional Law. He feared that the administration of the Regency would not be uniform in the Empire and in Prussia. Then the breakaway of the South German states would come as by necessity of nature.

Bavaria had already set foot on the path of separation from the Empire. Finally the Imperial throne would fall, and then the Republic would be declared.

Friedberg found the legal situation clear ; he suggested, however, that should the Reichstag take the view held by some writers that the Constitution was deficient on this point, there was always the solution that all the Prussian Princes should refuse the Regency. Then the Landtag would have to elect a Regent and the same person could be elected for the Empire and for Prussia.

Towards the end of the meeting Solf announced a telephone message from Herr von Hintze to the effect that no decisions were to be taken, as a courier was on the way from Headquarters with very important information.

Even without this caution the Cabinet would not on any account have taken a vote on the question of abdication.

Meantime I was negotiating with the Grand Duke and Prince Friedrich Karl of Hesse who had done me the favour of accompanying the Grand Duke.

The Grand Duke did not feel himself to be the right person to act as mediator, and refused to go to Spa. I thus turned to Prince Friedrich Karl. He appeared to me uniquely suited to bridge the gulf which had opened between myself and the Kaiser. He was the Kaiser's brother-in-law and in the closest touch with opinion in the army ; in his command of a regiment he had proved himself a model leader. Two of his sons had fallen, and he himself had been wounded. He had just provisionally refused the crown of Finland which had been offered him, so as not to render the conclusion of peace more difficult.[1] Prince Friedrich Karl asked for time to consider whether he could undertake the mission or not.

I then received Prince August Wilhelm of Prussia and tried to make it clear to him, too, that the Kaiser ought to act before

[1] On 11th October the Finnish Parliament had elected Prince Friedrich Karl of Hesse king. On the 22nd the Prince had declared he could give no answer for two months, as he did not want to place obstacles in the way of peace.

he was subjected to a painful pressure from Parliament. He showed no understanding for such considerations.[1]

On the afternoon of 31st October I had invited Herren Payer, Wahnschaffe, Friedberg, Drews, Simons and Scheüch to a private discussion in my room. I wanted to discuss the question of the Kaiser's abdication with men who did not owe their elevation to the panic of the last days of September, but whose choice had been due to the sole discretion of the Kaiser. I set great store on the report of the Prussian Minister of the Interior, Herr Drews, who was the embodiment of the best traditions of Prussian officialdom.

I opened the discussion with a short resumé of the foreign news on the subject of the opposition between Wilson and Foch. The gist of it was that Wilson's position would be strengthened by a renunciation of the throne on the part of Kaiser and Crown Prince.

'In any case the terms will be very hard. We can still put up a resistance against them. But the question is: Would the German people, the great majority of whom will hold His Majesty responsible for the severity of the conditions (that is the result of the foreign propaganda and of the wording of Wilson's notes) be ready to make this effort and fight on if it finds the conditions too hard; or will it say "we will not fight on; it is the Kaiser who is to blame"? Would not there arise a demand for His Majesty to abdicate so that the conditions might be alleviated and our Peace of Justice secured?

That is the great question with which we are faced.

Had the Kaiser abdicated a fortnight ago we should now be in a position to fight on. There can be no question of any but a voluntary renunciation. This would, I am convinced, secure the Dynasty. Should His Majesty yield to pressure it is impossible to say for certain that the movement will stop at his decision.

Against the abdication there are weighty reasons that can be urged. Millions of Germans will not understand it, even within the Trades Unions there are great differences of opinion.

[1] According to Alfred Niemann in his book *Kaiser und Revolution* Berlin, p. 121 n.) Prince August Wilhelm is said on this occasion to have advised me to resign on the ground of ill-health. I assert positively that such a remark was never made, and in general that the whole account of the conversation there given is incorrect.

Some of the leaders have stated that the abdication would have an explosive effect on the Trade Unions. Our decisions must not be induced by sentiment but dictated by clear thinking. I do not need to tell you what it means to me to have to touch on this subject at all.'

Then Drews spoke. His speech was that of a man acting under the compulsion of his conscience. Often it seemed as if his voice would fail him :

' It cannot be denied that the movement for His Majesty's abdication is gaining daily strength among a large section of the people—not only among the workers but also in the middle classes. The Kaiser and the Crown Prince are regarded as standing in the way of peace. There is no doubt that the old Social Democratic Party will now make the demand that Kaiser and Crown Prince must abdicate. After what Scheidemann said we must assume that the party, perhaps from fear of its competitors, will make this demand officially.

Should bad conditions come and we summon the people to resist them, the Independents will do all in their power to make this fight fruitless. They are determined by means of strikes and disturbances to prevent such a struggle. The masses are swaying in the balance and a single powerful slogan will win them over to the camp of the Independents.

But the old Social Democratic Party will have nothing to do with such a summons to fight on either ; so much is clear from the utterances of their leaders. The position would then be a very difficult one. Scheidemann and Bauer would leave the Government, thereby bringing the Kaiser's person once more to the fore. Such action would win back to them their former supporters.

Everything that one overhears of the conversations that take place in public places and conveyances points to a conviction which keeps spreading to further sections of the people—even to heavy industry and high finance—that the Kaiser's person is the chief obstacle in the way of peace. Under these circumstances the appeal will presumably be effective in the country districts but not in towns or centres of industry. But it is just the towns which are the chief source of all that we require to get out of the masses, and they will, in my opinion, fail us.

I do not therefore think that the proclamation would meet with any success.

The question of abdication is perhaps the hardest which

could be put to a Prussian official. But as a responsible minister I must give it as my opinion that with the Kaiser's personality at the head of affairs, the proclamation of the final struggle would not find the general popular support that is required.'

He was contradicted by the War Minister Scheüch :

He was ready, he said, to leave his feelings out of the question and treat the matter from a purely objective point of view. The Minister of the Interior had said that no good would come of an appeal to the people as long as His Majesty remained on the throne ; the workers in the towns would have nothing to do with it. He must admit this—among other things as the result of news which he had received from the district of the Seventh Army Corps. And this held good in the first place of the Independents, but also of the old Social Democratic Party. We ought to discuss all this with the party leaders a few days before issuing such appeal—in particular with Scheidemann.

'But even if it be true that the appeal would only be effective among the people after the removal of this obstacle, I must counter by asking how the abdication will affect the army. The generals and the old officers think not only of the country and of the material well-being of the people, but of their sworn loyalty to their Kaiser. Take from them this and you will take from them that which above all else enables them to hold out. I should therefore see great danger in any such step and must strongly deprecate taking any steps in this sense at the present time.'

I replied to the War Minister that a resignation under pressure would have a bad effect on the army, not so the voluntary resignation in question.

Scheüch wanted to make the Government partly responsible for the circulation of the abdication idea.

'Why have we taken no action to counter it in the Press,' he said, 'The people has been led to believe that the Government is of the same opinion as the Press which makes public opinion. Instead of leading it, we let ourselves be driven. This is not the only case ; there are plenty of others. We are not the governors, but the governed. We ask every evening : Will the parties approve of the action we have taken or not ?

The demagogues are on the point of getting the upper hand, if we do not take measures to counter them.'

The Prussian Minister of the Interior, Herr Drews, reminded him that far more dangerous than the passages quoted from the newspapers were the rumours that went from mouth to mouth. The Press only mirrored public opinion.

'I admit that the effect on foreign countries is very doubtful. *I admit that the abdication will have no good effect on the army, though there much of the damage can be avoided if the abdication takes a suitable form.* I have in my eye the people at home. *When workers and a large section of the middle classes look on the Kaiser's person as an obstacle to peace, any further resistance seems to me impracticable.* The army alone cannot conduct such a resistance; if it is not backed up by the people, we shall drift into a condition of things similar to that in Russia and Austria. There, too, the army held out splendidly, and behind the front the State broke up. This will be the result in our case too, if we do not hold the people behind the front together.'

Solf declared that the Kaiser's abdication, if it came, must come in time for Wilson to be able to make use of it in his own support at the Congressional Elections of 5th November.

'Roosevelt and the Republicans demand Germany's annihilation and the Kaiser's expulsion. The (American) people has no understanding for our constitutional reforms; it can only understand a symbol. Thus the President does not desire the abdication out of ill-will towards us but for our own benefit, for only if he holds a strong position over against his own people and of his Allies, will he have a chance of playing the part of arbitrator in the peace negotiations.'

Payer emphasized especially the state of feeling in South Germany:

'Should the severity of the conditions render resistance necessary, the summons to a final struggle could not possibly be signed by the Kaiser. That is out of the question. By a Kaiser whom foreign countries regard as responsible for the war, whom many of our own people too regard as responsible for the war, whom very many of our own people regard as an obstacle in the way of better peace terms—no, that is impossible! Not only the

Independents, not only the Social Democrats, but almost the whole of South Germany would say : We are to fight for the Kaiser—then we fight no longer !

The other gentlemen talk of the country and think only of Prussia. You should go outside of your Prussia sometimes ! In my own country I was quite shocked by what I saw last September—that town and country are unanimous in demanding the abdication. In Bavaria the situation is far worse, in Baden and Saxony there will be no essential difference. . . .

The War Minister tells us we ought to give public opinion a lead and reproaches us with inaction. He is greatly mistaken. The Press is the expression of public opinion. One can naturally contribute one's own bit, but one cannot divert the stream. . . . It is the expression of the innermost feelings of the people. The wildest agitators for the Kaiser's removal belong to the parties of the Right. Among the high financiers and the captains of industry, yes, and even in the higher commissioned ranks of the army the demand " The Kaiser must go at once " may be heard expressed with astonishing frankness. . . . It is now known that the Social Democratic party would be content with the abdication of the Kaiser and the renunciation of the throne on the part of the Crown Prince. But the longer the agitation lasts, the more insistent will become the demands of those who hold that we have no more need of a Monarchy and should set up a Republic.'

Friedberg seconded Scheüch ; it would mean that the army would simply go to pieces.

Wahnschaffe reported on the feeling of the Christian Trades Unions on the basis of information which he had received from Erzberger. The leaders Umbreit, Mueller and Giesberts had declared the Kaiser's abdication would have a disruptive effect on the Trades Unions. There was complete disagreement in that quarter. Erzberger was for waiting and conducting counter-propaganda for the Kaiser.

At my request Herr Wahnschaffe went on to report statements which Ebert had made to him. Ebert had said that in the universal opinion to keep the Kaiser was impossible. He, Ebert, was doing everything possible to keep his party in hand and was trying to restrain them with the argument that it would be a much greater obstacle in the way of a good peace for his party to leave the Government on the Kaiser question

than for the Kaiser to refuse to abdicate. He hoped to be able to keep the party Press in check for a few days more.

Wahnschaffe added :

> ' This hope has not been fulfilled, and I had yesterday—as always—the impression that Ebert was honestly speaking the truth—*which shows that he no longer has control of his own Press.*'

I addressed to Friedberg the question : ' Can you at this moment imagine an Imperial Government being formed that did not include the Social Democrats ? '

Friedberg answered : ' Such a thing is hardly possible.'

Payer spoke of the great dilemma in which the Government found itself. In consequence of the characters of Kaiser and Crown Prince the monarchical principle had been almost irreparably shaken ; on the other hand it would also be seriously endangered should a child come to the throne.

I summed up the results of the meeting as follows :

> ' The opinions of the company differ. All the objections have been examined. I am quite clear that any abdication of His Majesty is only possible if it is entirely voluntary. I cannot threaten resignation, that is for me quite out of the question. I have been considering the possibility of making the situation clear to His Majesty through the mediation of a third party.
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> Should His Majesty himself be brought by the pressure of events to realize that his voluntary retirement would be of assistance to Germany I should not then oppose myself to such a view. But His Excellency Herr von Payer has told me that Bavaria is already considering whether it can remain in the Empire. There you may see the disruptive forces already at work. My chief concern is to avoid producing at home a situation in which the people demand the abdication. Such a situation would lead to civil war, since there are in the country millions who stand firmly by His Majesty.
>
> Any action at the moment is rendered extraordinarily difficult through His Majesty not being here but out at the front and occupied with military business. I have begged him to return as soon as possible. I can therefore do no more than consider the views which you have expressed and examine them further.'

Friedberg then put the question : ' *Are not the German*

Federal Princes most nearly concerned? Ought one not to initiate an exchange of views among them ? '

I answered : ' I have already considered that. So far as I can judge of the situation, they would not as a body be at all in favour of the abdication. *I have, however, taken steps to clear up this point further.* My Grand Duke has conveyed to me his view that at this hour the place of the German Princes is behind the German Kaiser.'

Friedberg asked : ' What about the Governments of the Federal States ? '

I answered that I was in continuous touch with them.

In my concluding remarks I had referred to the differences of opinion which existed among the company. I could have said more ; most of them were not even clear in their own mind ; their judgment seemed to be paralysed by the weighty reasons which could be adduced for both sides. The appeal to the Federal Princes came from the heart. Rightly understood it meant : ' The responsibility is too great for us.' Scheüch's line was clearly mapped out : he spoke as a soldier and only considered the reaction of the army. Here he seemed to be sure of himself. Drews had after a painful struggle reached uncompromising clarity of view. He had ruthlessly spoken out the truth which had been on my mind for days : *Either the Kaiser goes, or we have to give up National Defence.*

At the end of the meeting Drews only kept control of himself with difficulty ; on his way out he almost collapsed on the stairs. I begged him to start the same evening for General Headquarters to inform his King in his capacity of Minister of the Interior of the state of opinion in the country. I was certainly doubtful as to the ability of this matter-of-fact official to hold his own in an atmosphere to which he was not accustomed. I therefore tried to arrange for Count Lerchenfeld to accompany and support him. The Bavarian plenipotentiary in the Federal Council was a man of the world and a finished diplomat, and he could have represented his King's view as well as his own. Count Lerchenfeld was willing but did not receive his Government's permission.

In spite of this I still wanted Drews to start and hoped that Prince Friedrich Karl would overtake him next day.

Late on 31st October I received two pieces of news which could only urge me forward on the path I had chosen.

One of the Under-Secretaries, Herr David, had expressed in conversation with one of my colleagues his anxiety at the growing agitation against the Monarchy, but had added the words : ' If the Kaiser abdicates, the back of the Republican movement will be broken.'

And Simons described to me a still more important conversation which he had had with the Independent deputy, Herr Haase. Haase had spoken of the Kaiser's abdication as a matter which was without any special interest for himself and his party. The essential thing for them, he said, was to prevent the National Defence scheme coming off.

I was reminded of Drews' words : ' The masses are swaying in the balance and a single powerful slogan will win them over to the camp of the Independents.' It was suspicious that Herr Haase attached no importance to the abdication ; perhaps he even felt a malicious joy at the Kaiser's hesitation. What slogan could at the moment be more effective against the National Defence scheme than the cry : ' The war must go on because the Kaiser will not sacrifice his personal interests in the cause of peace.'

On the morning of 1st November Prince Friedrich Karl intimated that he was ready to undertake the painful mission to the Kaiser. I asked Simons to accompany him ; they were to start the same evening. I did not let myself be put off by the various warnings that arrived in the course of the day from General Headquarters. These were addressed through various channels to all the prominent people of Berlin, and they one and all took the War Minister's line of argument—the Kaiser's abdication will not be tolerated by the army. To Drews' statement that the people would turn a deaf ear to the proclamation of National Defence should it bear the Kaiser's signature, came the threatening reply of the Military : ' The army will give way, should it not bear the Kaiser's signature.'

I, however, began to see clearer and clearer the one way out. It must be the Kaiser who should call on the struggling and toiling people to make a last rally—but it must be the *retiring* Kaiser. In one and the same document the Supreme War-Lord would announce his abdication of the throne for the sake of peace and would adjure army and civil population to fight on, should his sacrifice be in vain and a dishonourable armistice be in store for us.

We were occupied the whole day—with one interruption—in preparing the documents which Prince Friedrich Karl was to lay before the Kaiser together with an explanatory memorandum. Simons, too, was now possessed by the conviction that we had no other choice. His certainty grew even more certain in the course of the work; his own drafting—which always tuned his train of ideas up to the last pitch of lucidity—had had a compelling effect upon him. All our doubts thus vanished and there grew upon us a solemn feeling of confidence; we firmly believed that our plan served the best interests not only of the Empire and the Monarchy but even of the Monarch himself. Should the Kaiser take the momentous decision—and that at once—the National Defence scheme and the Monarchy would be saved and coming generations would bless the Kaiser's name.

At 11 o'clock I went to the Bavarian Ministry where the voting members of the Federal Council were assembled. I declared to them that I had for days been uninterruptedly reflecting on the question of His Majesty's abdication; the Kaiser had been kept continually informed; I, for my part, could only consider an absolutely free decision on the part of the Kaiser; this alone could save army and country from damage and at the same time be in keeping with the dignity of the Empire. For myself too I demanded freedom of action and mentioned Scheidemann's undertaking of yesterday not to make the Kaiser's abdication into a question of resignation from the Cabinet. But I prepared the Cabinet for the possibility that Scheidemann might change his mind under the daily increasing pressure to which he was subjected.

On the day when I should be compelled to approach the Kaiser myself on the question, I must know the attitude which the Federal Princes would take up.

I then requested them to set off at once to their respective sovereigns and inform them of my attitude on this decisive point. I would expect to hear telegraphically the results of the journey; the words 'agreement' or 'disagreement' would be sufficient. Naturally such expression of agreement would not imply any demand for the Kaiser to abdicate but would simply mean: Should the Kaiser voluntarily decide on abdication, then the Princes understand this decision and offer no objection to it.

I was at once questioned as to whether I had a simultaneous renunciation on the part of the Crown Prince in mind and as to the form which the monarchical power was in this case to take so as to prevent destructive elements reaping any possible advantage.

I replied that I presumed the simultaneous renunciation of the Crown Prince would be inevitable.[1]

[1] *I am reproached with having taken the renunciation of the Crown Prince for granted in my publication of 9th November. No one who had the least hope of saving the throne for the Hohenzollerns could have acted otherwise. To inform the Crown Prince was on 9th November no longer possible. But I have always felt it as a serious omission on my part that I did not during the time from 25th October onwards find an opportunity of discussing with the Crown Prince the question of his renunciation.*

I was deterred by the following considerations:

1. Up to 9th November the Kaiser had declared again and again that the abdication was not for him a subject for serious discussion. This made it difficult to discuss the question of the renunciation of the throne with the Crown Prince.

2. During the last days of October and the first days of November an illusion was prevalent to which I momentarily fell a victim, viz., that the Crown Prince could reconcile the people to his succession by simply publishing a declaration to the effect that he would adhere to the new system from conviction. At the suggestion of the Chancellery the Crown Prince did in fact on 7th November address a letter to me in this sense.

3. In the days immediately preceding the Revolution the plan of appointing a deputy for the Kaiser was uppermost in my mind—among other things just because it would be possible by this means to circumvent the Crown Prince's renunciation for the moment.

In retrospect it must be admitted that all these considerations were without significance in face of the fact that the German people looked on the Crown Prince as an even greater obstacle in the way of peace than the Kaiser. That was the result of the detestable propaganda of the

I should insist most emphatically on a Prussian Prince taking over the Regency so as to avoid any essential change in our constitution and to ensure the stability of the Empire.

To the question as to what attitude would be taken up by the Reichstag Majority, I answered that the Centre Party imagined they could wait till the enemy conditions reached us, that the party had, however, not taken any clear line and would obviously make no difficulty in case of a voluntary decision on the Kaiser's part. Nor had the attitude of the

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Entente, and of the armistice offer in which we had appealed to Wilson as our saviour and judge, thus exposing our people to his seductions. In all the discussions of the abdication it had been almost exclusively the abdication of the Kaiser in favour of his grandson that had been intended. It is also important to note that the strongest argument which was always brought into the field by opponents of the abdication was : ' Woe to the people who have a child king ! '

I quote the following words of Count Westarp from the *Wochenschau* of 3rd November (Westarp, *op. cit.* p. 80) : ' The abdication of the Kaiser which the Social Democrats demand would in our view lead by an unavoidable chain of consequences to the end of the Hohenzollern dynasty and of the unity of the Empire. We must in this connection remember that the Social Democrats and the circles which take their side on this question, have also in view the abdication of the Crown Prince, who would not be any more acceptable than the Kaiser, either to President Wilson and our other enemies or to our democracy. *The only conceivable solution—which is in fact demanded—is the abdication in favour of the infant grandson and a Regency.* Such Regency would have to be administered according to the constitition of the Empire as of Prussia by the nearest prince of the royal family who is of age and eligible for the throne, that is *Prince Eitel Friedrich.* Let us read over once again what Frederick the Great says in his political testament about a Regency. . . . It is clear from many events of the last few weeks that the Entente is employing its vast resources to fan the sparks of particularism in the hope of breaking up the Empire. Now there can be no doubt that a proper interpretation of the constitution provides that the Regency in the Empire should be held by the Regent of the Prussian crown *ex officio.* But who could guarantee that under the present conditions the proper interpretation of the constitution will be accepted—that it will not be ruthlessly scrapped to suit the convenience of the political forces that are now at the helm ? Thus there can be no question that the man who demands the abdication of the Kaiser must be quite clear in his own mind that he is seriously endangering the dynasty, the monarchical constitution and the unity of the German Empire as well.' (Author's italics.) Since Count Westarp here gives us a thorough and detailed discussion of the Kaiser's succession and since he mentions the prevailing democratic view that a succession of the Crown Prince would be inacceptable, he ought of course to have protested strongly against such a view, and to have demanded the Crown Prince's succession, if he had really regarded it as still possible in the given situation.

Democrats been clearly formulated, but I had the impression that in their view the abdication of the Kaiser would improve both the home and the foreign situation.

One of the plenipotentiaries seemed to doubt whether I took the pressure at home seriously enough ; in the last few days it had been growing and would grow ever stronger. He spoke of the duty of taking preventive measures. Did the Chancellor really believe that he was entitled under these circumstances to take up a merely informative attitude to the Kaiser ?

In my answer I did not conceal the fact that I too felt the daily growing pressure from below. It was true the Kaiser took the view that he ought not now to leave the Empire in the lurch ; but we must already face the situation which would arise were inacceptable terms presented ; no power on earth, and no Government, would be able to persuade the people that they would not get better armistice terms if the Kaiser went ; and thus their fury would be directed more against the Kaiser than against the enemy. Thus I did not know how much longer I could avoid having pressure put on me by the War Cabinet. Up to now Ebert had succeeded in staving off a formal resolution of his party, but soon events might move rapidly. In spite of this I must insist that only through a voluntary decision of the Kaiser should we be able to master the situation.

To a further question whether I really believed that I should be able to save the monarchy by a voluntary abdication, I replied by quoting the confident prediction of the Under-Secretary, Herr David.

After a short discussion of the news which had reached us from enemy countries I was asked by the Minister from Wuerttemberg, Herr von Varnbueler, to tell them how the process of informing the Kaiser was being carried on and whether the impression that His Majesty had gone to the front to avoid further treatment of the question here was correct.

I replied according to my own conviction that the Kaiser was far from entertaining such an idea, but that certain

forces which were desirous of removing His Majesty from Berlin, had presumably been at work. The process of information was being carried on by various men who were *persona grata* with the Kaiser, and who could approach him with a certain authority. One of these agents was that very day with the Kaiser ; another would follow him next day.

But the Councillors would not rest there. What did the Chancellor think of doing if these confidential agents remained unsuccessful ? I was, they said, according to the Constitution, the man who alone was ultimately responsible —on whom the Kaiser in the last resort must depend.

I replied that my position as Heir Apparent of Baden rendered it difficult for me to propose the abdication directly to the Kaiser. But above all I could in the present situation give emphasis to my words only by simultaneously threatening resignation ; and then the Kaiser would lose all freedom of decision. Only in the last extremity would I take this step.

Here I was seconded by Count Lerchenfeld ; the resignation of the present Government on this question, he said, would make the Revolution inevitable.

The plenipotentiaries formulated their conclusion arising out of my statement as follows :

> ' The Chancellor now apparently regards it as necessary to take serious steps to deal with the question of the abdication of the Kaiser, this to include the simultaneous abdication of the Crown Prince, on the basis of a Regency to be administered in the Empire and in Prussia by a Prussian Prince till the coming of age of the Crown Prince's eldest son. The Chancellor bases himself on the principle that only a voluntary abdication can be considered, and thus desires for the present to take up a purely informative attitude towards the Kaiser ; he, however, reserves to himself the right of taking a further decision under certain circumstances, and would like to be informed now as to the position of the other Federal Princes, as to whether, should the Kaiser of his own free will decide on abdication, they would, from the Federal Princes' point of view, approve of such a decision or not.'

At the end of the meeting the Bavarian Minister told me in confidence that His Majesty the King of Bavaria

had already signified his agreement in the sense I had outlined.

I returned to the Chancellor's Palace with a feeling that the majority of the representatives of the Federal States took the same view of the situation as I [1]; but that some of them thought the steps that I had undertaken not sufficiently energetic to avert the threatened disaster in time.

It was on Prince Friedrich Karl that I pinned all my hopes.

In the afternoon we continued working on the material which was to accompany him to headquarters. I give the documents in the order of their composition. In some places they express the personal opinion of Simons which I did not share; *e.g.*, his proposal to appoint a Regent for Prussia and an Administrator [Reichsverweser] for the Empire. I told him to make corrections on the way. Only the two proclamations 'To my people' and 'To my army' were to be submitted to the Kaiser. The Memorandum was to be made use of by Prince Friedrich Karl as he thought fit.

I

(Memorandum)

The question of the abdication of His Majesty the Emperor and King, is being openly canvassed, and the Imperial Government must therefore define clearly and immediately its position. In examining the question the presumed intentions of the enemy ought only to count in so far as they react on the situation at home. Thus it is not of decisive importance to determine whether President Wilson's note is to be considered to demand the abdication or to content itself with constitutional reforms. It is on the requirements of the situation at home that everything depends.

That His Majesty's abdication, followed necessarily as it would be by renunciation on the part of His Imperial and Royal Highness the Crown Prince, would involve dangers for Prussia and for the Empire requires no further elaboration. But if the step is inevitable these dangers can be countered. Serious convulsions can be avoided if the Federal Govern-

[1] I had this view corroborated in the course of the next few days.

ments and parties are informed soon enough; if a bill for regulating the election of an Administrator is at once prepared; if the Regency in Prussia is set up according to existing law; if a suitable member of the Royal Family in the male line is chosen Regent in Prussia; if a person who enjoys the trust of his own people and who does not directly arouse the mistrust of foreign countries is chosen as Imperial Administrator; if His Majesty the Kaiser and King offers up his crown freely for the welfare of his people; and if he emphatically urges his loyal adherents to respect his will in this point too. But such convulsions are inevitable if the abdication is any longer delayed.

The communication to us of the terms on which the enemy is perpared to grant us an armistice is imminent; as far as can be foreseen this can only be a matter of a few days. The conditions will be so hard that they will be a stunning blow on the head to our people which is still completely ignorant as to Germany's position. The educated classes will in part react to the insolence of the enemy with feelings of furious indignation and with a cry to the rest to make a last stand, the masses on the other hand in their enormous majority with bitter reproaches against their Supreme Commander—who as they think could by a timely abdication have saved them from this humiliation—and with a cry for such abdication. The cry will be so loud as not to be ignored, and even monarchical circles will be brought by it into such a state of uncertainty as will make their support useless. The resulting cleavage in the ranks of the people will hardly allow it to pull itself together for a final struggle—in any case it would take all the fire and all the breath out of the final struggle.

His Majesty will not for long be able to resist the pressure which will be exerted on him simultaneously from at home and abroad, since it will not be possible to employ the army to put down a popular movement when once the alternative is put: Either the August Person, or a tolerable peace. The Person, who, misunderstood and misrepresented as he is, bears the responsibility before history will then no longer be able to abdicate with a dignity without which his step would be disastrous for dynasty and monarchy. People would no longer receive the Kaiser's abdication with feelings of gratitude but would impatiently demand further sacrifices.

Should the sacrifice be made without delay it might so stiffen public opinion that we should be in a position to reject intolerable conditions and fight on with a united front.'

II

Proclamation by the King of Prussia (Simons' Draft).

To My People!

For more than twenty-five years I have maintained peace in Germany. In spite of all, the war was finally forced on us, and our people in arms has been conducting it as a war of defence, even though on enemy soil. The war has been decided against us and a purposely misled public opinion in the enemy countries lays the blame for all the sorrow it has suffered upon us. The deeds and sufferings of the German people and specially of My Prussians have not been rewarded by the prize of victory, but they have fought and worked, borne and suffered heroically and won immortal glory. This glory shall not be dimmed, as far as lies in My power to prevent it, by any conditions of armistice or of peace which are incompatible with our honour. The hatred which the enemy feels for Me may increase the severity of the conditions. In this moment I therefore feel it My duty to lay down the Crown of Prussia and with it the Imperial Crown, rather than to continue to bear the burden of them any longer.

I thank My Prussians and the whole German people for their unexampled self-sacrifice in the cause of the Fatherland, which cause I too had made My own. I urge you not to leave it in the lurch but to do your very utmost, should honour demand it, to make clear to the enemy that Germany will never willingly take upon herself unworthy conditions.

III

Proclamation by the German Emperor (Simons' Draft).

To the German Army!

To-day I renounce the Imperial Crown and lay down that Supreme Command of the German Army which by the Constitution is reserved for the Emperor.

The hatred of the enemy for My person which they slander and misjudge shall not be allowed, My comrades, to influence unfavourably the conditions on which you will lay down your arms or which will spur you on to make a last stand. Should the enemy grant an armistice which is in keeping with your honour and with the honour of the German people, you will then be able to say to yourselves that that is the result of your

> own heroic resistance. If, however, the conditions are unacceptable for Germany, My last word to you is: Up to now you have been fighting on foreign soil to the greater glory of the German arms, you must now defend your native soil with all the power that lies in you. Keep your eyes and your hearts fixed only on the enemy! Have no anxiety about the people at home! They will do all in their power to help you; our whole people will refuse to yield to dishonourable conditions without a struggle.

Years later I showed these drafts to the one colleague who had been up to the very last moment of my Chancellorship the bitterest opponent of the Kaiser's abdication. After reading the proclamations 'To my people' and 'To my army' he exclaimed: 'That would have been our salvation!'

Prince Friedrich Karl came towards evening to say goodbye—as I thought. I told him of the view held at Headquarters; he ought to realize what a well-organized resistance to the whole idea of the abdication he would meet with there. But the Prince himself was impressed by the line of resistance which the Supreme Command had taken up, and he was also struck by the hesitation which had been shown by various prominent personalities in civil life, who, though convinced of the necessity of the abdication, shrank from drawing the logical consequence of their conviction, for fear of the incalculable effects this move might have upon the army.

I called Simons and told him about the Prince's doubts. His accustomed correctness and patience deserted him—he flared up and turned upon Prince Friedrich Karl with words of passion, saying that if he could not bring himself to stand before the Kaiser, as Luther with his 'Here I stand, I cannot help myself, God help me!' had stood before the Reichstag at Worms, then he had better let the journey alone.

The Prince replied that that was for him impossible; without being convinced himself, he could not convince the Kaiser.

Simons went out to cancel the special train.

Outside he met Prittwitz and others who worked with me. They implored him to go once more to the Prince of Hesse and do anything he could to bring about the journey in spite

of everything. This last hope of ours must not be allowed to fall through.

Simons beat the table with his fist: 'None of that! I don't bully people! If the supporters of the Monarchy fail us now, we will have the Republic! One thing I will do: I won't countermand the special train, and after a while I will go in again and tell the Prince of Hesse that he can still go.'

In the meantime I was talking to my cousin and describing to him the whole seriousness of the situation at home. I said my nightmare was an ultimatum of the Social Democrats demanding abdication. But I felt it was an impossible task to bring him to undertake a mission for which he needed an inner conviction that he had not got.

Simons returned; the Prince had not changed his mind. The anxiety for the army was for him decisive. The journey had to be given up.

Thus one more hope had broken down. I had not yet got over my attack of influenza. The pressure of work of the last few days had utterly exhausted me, and I had a serious relapse. The doctor was called and wanted above all things to ensure me rest. He administered a drug which in my weakened state had a stronger effect than had been intended, and put me into a deep sleep. For thirty-six hours all attempts to wake me were in vain.

CHAPTER XI

THE MUTINY OF THE FLEET. GROENER'S ARRIVAL AND FIRST REPORT

About midday on Sunday, 3rd November, I had not long been awakened out of my state of coma when Haeften was announced. In kindly words he kept urging me to take a way out: 'You need not bear the horrible responsibility any longer; take refuge in your position as an officer and tell the Cabinet: The Kaiser is not going to abdicate voluntarily; as an officer I cannot compel his abdication. If you think otherwise, carry on yourselves.'

While I had been out of action, Haeften had already taken steps in this sense. On Saturday he had arranged with Payer to issue a notice to the Press to the effect that the Chancellor had suffered a relapse and that the Vice-Chancellor was in charge of affairs till further notice. Only the interference of my Adjutant, von Prittwitz, had prevented this bulletin being issued to the Wolff Press Agency.

At the moment I could not resist the seductive power of this counsel of flight, but soon afterwards I forced myself to face the realities of the situation. Haeften, as a mere soldier, was in a position to speak thus. But I had taken over the Chancellorship and with it the obligation to give the Kaiser responsible advice in the interest of the nation. I too had signed the armistice offer to Wilson, not in ignorance, but in clear consciousness of the deadly perils which it involved for Kaiser and Empire.

It was impossible for me to take advantage of my position as Heir-Apparent or as Officer to transfer the burden of decisions to the shoulders of others.

Soon afterwards Wahnschaffe came; it was touching to see his efforts to understand and relieve my position. He

wanted to persuade me—as he in fact himself believed—that in the last twenty-four hours he had succeeded in easing the situation in the Kaiser question.

Drews' mission had failed. He had been heard, but the Kaiser had announced to him his irrevocable determination not to abdicate. He had already exacted a promise from his sons that none of them would take over the Regency. Drews had to hear some hard words, from Groener in particular, upon the passivity which the Government showed towards the agitation in the Press. The Kaiser's remark that if he went the army would break up and the enemy invade the country unopposed, had made a deep impression on him. Hindenburg and Groener had backed this argument, the Field-Marshal in the strongest possible words ; after the abdication, he said, the army would simply stream back home like a horde of marauding bandits.

Payer and Wahnschaffe heard this report on Saturday as my representatives. They kept Drews on the spot till Scheidemann had been summoned, and then brought their united forces to bear on the latter to persuade him to hold up the Social Democratic demand till after the conclusion of the armistice. Scheidemann did not believe the army would lose all control after the abdication, as the Field-Marshal had feared, but he became very grave and finally declared there was much to be said for postponing this contentious question, till the armistice and if possible even the peace preliminaries had been arranged. The Social Democrats would then insist on the abdication, but up to then he would do all he could to keep his Party Executive in check. At Wahnschaffe's request the Food Minister, Herr von Waldow, who happened to come in, at once declared himself ready to employ his many-sided connections with Press and parties in this sense. Friedberg, Solf, Deutelmoser and Clemens von Delbrueck were likewise informed at once, the editors of the great papers and the leaders of the Majority Parties were individually reminded of the great danger there lay in a further accentuation of the Kaiser crisis. That very morning he, Wahnschaffe, had discussed the matter

thoroughly with Theodor Wolff, and found a sympathetic ear.

Wahnschaffe's initiative had gone still further during the time I was unconscious; he had informed Freiherr von Gruenau of his efforts and their success. This was bound to encourage the Kaiser's entourage to believe that His Majesty need not for the present consider the question of abdication.

I was unable to believe in this turn for the better. Wahnschaffe might have brought the temperature down, but that was merely a treatment of the symptoms, which would bring no real improvement but merely a deceptive calm in our immediate environment. It was quite possible that the Press would maintain an enforced restraint for a few days—but what was the use of that; the Press was not making the revolution, the movement was welling up from below. Everything depended on Scheidemann's leadership; and I knew well, that 'his Command was one in which the masses had just as much power over him as he had over the masses.'[1] Already on this Sunday morning the *Vorwaerts* had disobeyed the order, and referred once more to Scheidemann's letter to the Chancellor, thus rousing the people to fresh impatience—when would Scheidemann get an answer? Above all Scheidemann himself had at the Press meeting of the 2nd revealed his powerlessness in its full extent; he had spoken of threatened attempts at a *coup d'état*—6000 hand-grenades had been stolen. Haussmann asked him why he did not get the trades union leaders to calm down the excited meetings of the workers. Scheidemann replied: 'Until the "something" happens, we shall not be able to quiet them.'

Wahnschaffe's words made another, an unintended, impression on me. The Ministers kept talking of the imminent conclusion of the armistice, whereas we all in fact counted on receiving conditions which would be inacceptable. Anyone who was prepared to postpone the

[1] In Julius Caesar's *Bellum Gallicum* Ambiorix describes his powers of command in these words.

abdication, must in his inmost heart have given up the belief that we might have to make a stand against some of these conditions—if indeed, he had really thought out in advance the situation that would then inevitably result.

The abdication question occupied my mind in the first few hours after my waking up to the exclusion of all others, and I was obliged to infer that the position was even more hopeless than on the evening the Prince of Hesse refused to go.

Headquarters had not only defeated my attempt to convince the Kaiser, but had gained ground in my immediate environment.

On the evening of 3rd November I went back to work. Simons, Wahnschaffe and Prittwitz reported to me upon all the revolutionary changes which the world had seen in the course of the last twenty-four hours.

On 31st October Turkey had accepted the armistice which the Allies had presented her in answer to her separate action. The humiliating details were now disclosed : The Dardanelles and the Bosporus were opened to the enemy ; the Allies obtained the right of occupying all strategic points, military sites and harbours ; telegraphs and railways were put under their control ; all German and Austrian subjects, military and civil, must be expelled within a month.

On 2nd November Austria had accepted the enemy's armistice terms. One thing was clear : the Italian-Austrian frontier drawn by the armistice agreement was intended to prejudice the peace terms and was drawn not in accordance with ethnographical considerations, as had been demanded by the Fourteen Points, but with Italy's strategic needs which the Treaty of London had promised to satisfy. And Austria was deprived of all means of resistance, so that it would be defenceless when it came to peace negotiations.

The blockade was maintained ; the army restricted to a peace strength of twenty divisions ; half of all artillery stocks and all submarines had to be handed over ; the fleet was either to be handed over or to be disarmed.

The most terrible thing was, however, that Austria-Hungary was compelled to take sides against Germany. The Allies

were allowed to occupy strategic points at their discretion. They had complete freedom of movement for their troops on all roads, railways and waterways. The German troops were given a fortnight to evacuate the territory of their allies. At the end of this period Austria-Hungary was bound to intern any German soldiers that were still on its territory.

The meanness of this desertion, the reports said, was universally felt in Austria. Andrassy's step, taken with a view to saving the Danube Monarchy, was the signal for its dissolution ; everywhere a Republican Nationalism was the order of the day. The Poles in Krakow, the Bohemians, the South Slavs proclaimed their independence, but the festivities were in many cases broken in upon by Soldiers' Councils. Hungary had on 1st November declared itself to be a neutral state. In fact, Hungary under Karolyi had gone over to our enemies, as his very first acts showed ; the Hungarian soldiers were arbitrarily recalled from the front, cargoes of corn, ores and Rumanian oil destined for Germany and German-Austria were held up on the Danube.

In German-Austria, too, there was now a ' National Government,' a Council of State, which had been elected by the National Assembly on 30th October. The Social Democrat, Victor Adler, had the decisive voice in it ; Count Botho Wedel in his reports described him as a patriotic German and a man of high political talent.

The Lammasch-Andrassy Ministry of Liquidation was not yet allowed to disappear. People were only too glad for this Ministry and the Emperor to have to put their signatures to the armistice terms. The *Arbeiterzeitung* [*Workers' Gazette*] spoke of the ' dirty and despicable end of the old Austria.'

In this contemptible finale the moral objections to the Reunion Movement which had been felt, now gave way. The cry of ' Home to Germany ! ' released a new and healing force that swayed men's minds. It was as if long-forgotten longings were welling up out of the depths of our common history.

Only the Christian Socialists did not allow themselves to be carried off their feet. In spite of them the Council of

State came near issuing an official manifesto in favour of the Reunion. Count Wedel informed us of the argument of the realists which held it back at the last moment and put the words ' Republic of German-Austria ' in the foreground :

> The natural development of things, he wrote, is leading inevitably to the reunion with the German Empire. But if German-Austria were to come forward with this plan at the Peace Conference the Alpine districts in particular were afraid the German Empire would not be strong enough to save the Tyrolese territory in face of the Italian claims. It was believed that German-Austria would be in a stronger position were it to adopt a form of constitution corresponding to President Wilson's ideas.

The Council of State let no opportunity slip of demonstrating against the breach of faith and gave convincing expression to its German sympathies. The formation of a German-Austrian army of its own was also resolved upon. But for the moment the new Government truly declared that German-Austria was unable to continue the war at Germany's side, since its army contained formations with a majority of Slavs and Magyars who would fight no longer.

Thus Austria irrevocably became a base of operations for our enemies, realizing the situation which Gallwitz had for a moment been inclined to look on as decisive at the session of 28th October. It at once became clear that the reassuring supplementary remarks which he had sent in after giving his report—' We have still several armies in the East and South-East, I had overlooked that '—had no foundation in the facts.

I had asked General Groener to give me a precise statement as to any German troops there might be outside of Germany and of the Western theatre of war, and as to what the Supreme Command intended to do with them.

The answer was now to hand :

> ' General Headquarters,
> 31*st October*, 1918.
>
> Chief of the General Staff of the
> Army in the Field.
>
> Outside of Germany and of the Western theatre of war the following German troops are stationed :

(*a*) In Finland: Staff of the Baltic Division and 1 Cavalry Brigade.

It is our intention if possible to leave these troops in Finland, until the Bolshevist peril has been averted from that country.

(*b*) In the Baltic lands (exclusive of the Ukraine): 6 Divisions, 4 Brigades, 116 Landsturm Battalions. Three further Divisions are in process of being transported to the West.

It is intended to leave the bulk of the troops here enumerated in the Baltic lands, where they are required as frontier guards and for administrative purposes. Any further withdrawal of our front going beyond the one now in process would not mean any saving of troops since we already take up the shortest line possible, while a further evacuation would lengthen the Northern frontier of the Ukraine. Also all the evacuated land must fall a victim to Bolshevism.

(*c*) In the Government of Warsaw: 36 Landsturm Battalions.

It is intended to leave these where they are, since, even if the country were to be evacuated, they would be necessary as frontier and railway guards.

(*d*) In the Ukraine: 13 Divisions, 57 Landwehr and Landsturm Battalions.

It is intended to leave these troops where they are, since they represent the minimum contingent necessary for the exploitation of the land, which would otherwise fall a prey to Bolshevism.

(*e*) In the Caucasus: This is being evacuated. There remains only one piquet of about 500 men.

(*f*) In Wallachia: 6 Divisions and 1 Cavalry Brigade, further 13 Landsturm Battalions. Further 1 Division from Hungary (see *h*) and the Training School in the Caucasus (5 Battalions).

It is intended to hold Wallachia until the railway situation allows of the removal of the troops, or until attacks by superior forces compel us to evacuate it.

(*g*) In Turkey: A large number of single formations, chiefly specialists, all in all, inclusive of the military mission, amounting to a strength of about 32,000 men.

It is intended to dispatch these troops for the present to the Ukraine.

(*h*) In Hungary: 1 Division and a number of individual formations, among them 10 unattached Battalions.

It is intended to bring these troops home to Germany. The transport of one more division to Wallachia [cp. (f.)] and of a third to Germany has already been ordered.

pp. GROENER.

To the Chancellor.'

For the building up of the new Southern front there were in the first instance the troops that had been left in Wallachia and Hungary. The route to the Ukraine via Rumania could only have been forced at the cost of a fresh war with Rumania. Mackensen had already ordered his troops to march back via Hungary. Would Hungary, hostile as it now was, let him through? We had one effective means of pressure in our power to cut off the coal deliveries that were for Hungary essential. The Foreign Office had already threatened Budapest with this possibility and had made a visible impression; but the Hungarian railways were in a terrible condition, and the country on the verge of Bolshevism. Fresh assassinations were expected to follow upon Count Tisza's murder, so the Minister of Justice who had taken refuge in Berlin informed us. We ought not to count on Mackensen's army any longer.

The withdrawal of the troops from the other Eastern territories appeared technically possible. Poland, it is true, could not be given up until we had evacuated the Ukraine, as we needed the Polish railways for the transport of our troops and could not protect the railways, unless we kept the country under our occupation.[1]

Waldow was ready at any moment to give up the Ukraine

[1] A report from the Governor-General of Warsaw, von Beseler, dated 2nd November, 1918, expresses the opinion that the complete withdrawal of the German Troops of Occupation, while desirable in itself, would only be possible could Lithuania, White Russia and the Ukraine be evacuated simultaneously, since these Troops were necessary to maintain communications between them and the home country. A reinforcement of the troops of occupation, which only consisted of thirty-five weak Landsturm battalions dispersed over the whole country with some quite inconsiderable Cavalry and Artillery detachments, would certainly soon be necessary. Otherwise he could not take the responsibility for maintaining order in such an 'agitated and disordered country.' The withdrawal of our troops would probably give rise to a chaos which might be not without danger to our adjoining provinces.

to facilitate a last stand, though he himself had admitted at the Cabinet meeting in the afternoon of the same day (3rd November) that the food supply ' hung on a single thread.' But the Supreme Command would not evacuate. Groener's answers contained the warning repeated with a solemn monotony that we ought not to leave the country exposed to Bolshevism.

Was Groener objective ? Like General Hoffmann he had long been on outpost duty in the East, protecting and maintaining order, filled with the consciousness of our power and of the responsibility which was laid upon us. These Eastern soldiers had ' Ethical Imperialism ' in their bones at a time when the brains of the politicians were still impervious to it. They felt that not only the nation's word but their own honour was at stake. They felt it impossible for us to withdraw our protecting hand from the Baltic peoples, the Finns, and the Ukrainians, whom we had liberated and whose confidence we had won. Thus there was reason to suspect that Groener was not quite unbiased on the question of the troops we might bring up from the East.

In the Cabinet there was a strong current of opinion against the Supreme Command's view. Erzberger and Scheidemann in particular clamoured for the withdrawal of the troops. Scheidemann did in fact hope that our evacuation would give rise to disturbances in Poland, so that opinion among the Prussian Poles might be influenced in our favour. Drews too on his return had once more laid siege to the War Minister to get him to induce a change of policy in the Supreme Command. The Minister of the Interior was in a state of extreme anxiety as to the fate of the ' heart of Prussia ' as he called West Prussia and Upper Silesia. What were the Ukrainians and Russian Poles to him, could he but manage to save the Prussian possessions and get ' his own ' Poles to be more tractable.

I at once took Groener's side. The news to hand on the evening of 3rd November left no doubt that Bolshevism was preparing a new stroke on a large scale. All Europe felt itself threatened. From Holland came reports of rioting in

the army ; in Harskamp near Arnhem, at Amersfoort and Flushing officers had been assaulted. Lucius reported from Stockholm that the Russian Minister Morovski had just received a warning from the Swedish Foreign Minister. Throughout Austria the nationalist states were wrestling with the Bolshevist peril. In England serious voices were raised to plead for moderation to be shown towards Germany, on the ground that in their own interest the English ought not to drive us into the arms of Bolshevism. Even Lloyd George's paper, the *Daily Chronicle*, talked in this strain. The English were again terribly well-informed as to our internal conditions.

Alarming news from the navy had reached the Chancellery ; on several ships in the port of Wilhelmshaven there had been cases of refusal to obey orders. The reports were still vague. Had discipline been restored ? Was Bolshevist agitation at the bottom of it or merely local discontent ? Ritter von Mann, Simons told me, had appeared with a very grave face at the Cabinet meeting and had reported as follows : The crews of several big ships had refused to obey the order to put out to sea (29th and 30th October). They had quite openly mutinied and barricaded themselves in, so that Admiral von Hipper had had to have them surrounded by torpedo-boats and even to have the torpedoes trained on them. Then the men who had refused duty were arrested. The mutineers had stated in explanation of their conduct that the officers and commanders of the fleet did not want peace and had intended to sacrifice the fleet in a great battle. The Minister of Marine, Ritter von Mann, asked for a proclamation from the Government urging the maintenance of discipline and promising no amnesty.

Day by day the *Vorwaerts* implored the workers not to let themselves be misled into seditious schemes. It spoke of civil disorders as of an imminent reality. The Social Democratic party had now quite given up its attitude of childlike confidence in the Russian Embassy and supported the Government's measures of control.

Who under these circumstances would answer for the

evacuation of the East ? To give the liberated countries over to their fate would have been to prepare the way for the triumphant march of Bolshevism up to the frontiers of our own country.

Thus there was nothing for it but for our hard-pressed Western armies to give up some of their troops for the purpose of forming the new Southern front. The Field-Marshal had already entrained the Headquarters Staff of the Second Bavarian Corps and the Fourth Bavarian Division and had had a Prussian division prepared for entrainment. He still had hopes of getting the Alpine Corps out of South Hungary. He had put the Bavarian drafts from home at the immediate disposal of the Bavarian authorities for the defence of that country. The Entente troops, according to a dispatch received by the War Minister of the Munich Government, were already in Sterzing [Vipiteno] and were expected in Innsbruck on 15th November. In Bavaria, and particularly on the frontier, consternation reigned. The War Minister von Hellingrath demanded the invasion of the Tyrol, and if necessary, the demolition of the Brenner tunnel. In the Cabinet objections had been made on grounds of international law. Simons was easily able to prove all such objections void. The armistice agreement between Austria and the Entente gave us neither rights nor duties. Germany need not show any special tenderness to her unfaithful allies, particularly as we could be certain that the Austrian National Government would in its inmost heart approve of any step which might be taken to protect German soil. The Austrian Minister, Herr Adler, had in fact informed Count Wedel in confidence that he would have no objection to a demolition of the Brenner tunnel, provided he received no official knowledge of it.[1] Our frontier was in fact, from a strategical point of view, unfavourable to a defence on Bavarian soil. Thus from an objective point of view the Bavarians were entirely justified in their demands, but behind these an ugly temper among the people, of whose existence we had kept

[1] On the following day (4th November) the Cabinet, too, gave its consent to the occupation.

receiving gloomy warnings, was making itself felt. The War Minister General Scheüch had the day before, 2nd November, reported that in the view of Bavarian officers the Bavarian troops could not be kept on the Western front any longer. In the same session we were told how Herr Held, a Bavarian member of the Reichstag, had openly discussed the possibility of a Bavarian separate peace. At this Herr Haussmann exclaimed indignantly : ' That is bad ; up to now it was only Poles and alien nationalities who had forsworn allegience. In Bavaria the present panic is giving birth to aspirations for Independence. Wuerttemberg is immune.'

On the same afternoon (3rd November) Dandl himself had appeared to make explanations. He was able to clear Held of all suspicion. In the utterance that was reported to us there was not a word of truth. But the Prime Minister had to admit that in Upper and Lower Bavaria and on the Bohemian frontier there was much talk of a separate peace. An immediate threat to the Bavarian frontier would have incalculable effects on the temper of the people. He begged us not to take the grousing of the Bavarians too seriously. But the Vice-Chancellor had come to the conclusion that in Bavaria there was much talk that was quite incompatible with any great degree of loyalty to the Empire.

After I had thus thoroughly informed myself as to the stormy developments of the last few days, I felt that a conversation with the Kaiser had become more necessary than ever. But I now no longer saw any way of compelling his return. A demand for leave to resign would on 29th October perhaps have induced the Kaiser to change his mind ; to-day I had a strong feeling that it would be granted. And what would happen then ? Later I learned that about this time Scheidemann had been sounded on behalf of the head of the Civil Cabinet as to whether the Kaiser could still manage to keep his throne, if he, Scheidemann, were to take over the Chancellorship.

I made one more attempt to bring influence to bear on

His Majesty via Solf and Clemens von Delbrueck, but had little hope of success.[1]

On 4th November I telegraphed to General Groener, asking to come as soon as possible to Berlin. I intended that he should report to us on the military situation and we to him on the situation at home. Groener had in great part helped to bring about the failure of Drews' mission ; it must, however, be considered that he had only left Kieff for Spa on 30th October, had spent 31st October and 1st November in getting his bearings at the front and thus had actually been for weeks quite out of touch with affairs at home. Still, at an early date, as Minister of Munitions, he had worked in daily co-operation with the Trades Unions, had won their confidence and made trial of their patriotism. He must realize at bottom that his task at the front would be insoluble in the event of a collapse at home ; it really ought to be possible to convince him here in Berlin that the home front would break down, should the Kaiser not make it possible for the Social Democrats to remain in the Government. Groener was Ludendorff's successor. If he could once free himself of the illusions of Headquarters, he might perhaps be able to bring even the Kaiser in Spa to look the facts in the face.

General Groener was to arrive in Berlin on the 5th and could not be back in Spa till 7th November. Could we wait till then ? We all had a premonition of overwhelming events ahead. Four weeks ago the question every morning had

[1] '*3rd November*, 1918. I most humbly beg to report to Your Majesty that the Vice-Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs were with me just now and informed me that the armistice conditions might be expected to arrive daily, and that in the opinion of the Cabinet it would be impossible to conduct the negotiations arising out of them in the absence of Your Majesty. I beg Your Majesty to take the desire of the Imperial Government for Your Majesty's speedy return into Your Majesty's most serious consideration, if only because in the present situation a Governmental crisis in connection with the armistice negotiations is highly probable, and such crisis could not be resolved with the necessary expedition in the absence of Your Majesty.

Your Majesty's most humble servants,

DELBRUECK.
SOLF.'

been : Has there been no catastrophe at the front ? To-day our worst fears were focussed on the dangers at home.

To-day, the 4th, riots had been arranged to take place in Berlin—so Herr Ebert had telephoned to Wahnschaffe, adding that the Trades Unions were doing all they could to keep the masses in hand, but according to his impression the local authorities were underrating the seriousness of the situation. We alarmed the competent authorities. At the Cabinet meeting Scheidemann felt he could reassure us ; in Berlin, he said, all possible steps had been taken to make the movement harmless for the present. Ebert had succeeded ' in getting together the spokesmen from the big industrial undertakings.' There was certainly one highly dangerous piece of news from Munich that had been published in a morning paper. A mob had marched out to the Stadelheim prison and had demanded the liberation of the prisoners. To publish news of this kind in Berlin at the present time was, he thought, nothing short of criminal.

The same morning a significant conversation took place between General von Winterfeldt and Scheidemann.

General von Winterfeldt : ' We count on the terms being hard. Should they be too hard, we would reject them, at the same time outlining the conditions which we would regard as tolerable. Even the Entente do not expect an immediate acceptance of their conditions.'

Scheidemann : ' The Supreme Command must be given an accurate picture of the inner situation. We are not in the position to resist any further. The situation has taken a definite turn for the worse.'

His words were reinforced in a way that was almost uncanny by the report made immediately afterwards before the Cabinet and to me personally by the Minister of Marine, Ritter von Mann :

The Third Squadron had arrived in Kiel, and had been guilty of very disorderly conduct, ' had made demands of a revolutionary character,' and ' threatened to assault its officers.' There had been a bloody conflict between crews of the Third Squadron and some troops on the march ;

there had been dead and wounded, and the leader of the troops which had remained true to their duty had been severely injured. Ritter von Mann regarded the situation as very serious ; he said that Ratzeburg and Lubeck had been requested to send military help.

The Naval Command was obviously no longer master of the situation. The Minister of Marine, acting also on behalf of the local authorities, asked for the help of the Social Democratic Party, *i.e.*, for the dispatch of Socialist deputies to try and calm things down. The editorial staff of the *Vorwaerts*, he informed us, was engaged in composing an explanatory leaflet ; the Government and the Supreme Naval Command were to sign it, and the Officers Commanding desired its immediate distribution. ' It was necessary to dispel an erroneous belief of the crews that the officers had the intention of annihilating the fleet, so as to avoid having to deliver it up.' [1]

On the same day we sent off the Socialist deputy, Herr

[1] The leaflet was signed by von Mann, Scheidemann and myself. It ran as follows :

SEAMEN ! WORKERS !

Deplorable events have occurred in the last few days. There have been collisions between crews engaged in attempting a forcible violation of good order and discipline, and troops who had received orders to maintain it ; *there have been dead and wounded.*

An inquiry has been opened,

in the course of which all circumstances which have led to these deplorable events will be carefully investigated.

According to the news which have reached us up to now, *senseless rumours* have been the occasion of the prevailing state of excitement. It has been *alleged* that the officers of the War Fleet were dissatisfied with the Peace policy of the Government, and had planned a stroke that involved a useless sacrifice of the lives of the crews. *The officers of the War Fleet receive their orders from the Government*, and *the charge* made against them of having disobeyed or of having intended to disobey these orders *is without foundation*. No one dreams of hazarding the lives of their fellow-countrymen, fathers of families many of them, to no purpose. The Government's proposal of an Armistice on 5th October was made in order to avoid purposeless bloodshed.

The fact that the Armistice is not yet concluded is due to the enemy not having yet named their terms. So long as the other side wills the war to go on, the German Command on land and by sea intends to be as sparing of human life as is compatible with the inevitable requirements of defence.

But the task of avoiding *useless bloodshed* is one that concerns the whole

Noske,[1] who as the Social Democratic party's expert for naval affairs had won great respect among the sailors. Herr Haussmann, too,[2] accompanied him as Government Representative.

Throughout 4th November telegraph and telephone connections functioned badly. We waited in a state of extreme tension for the first news from Noske and Haussmann. The gentlemen of the Admiralty were not clear in their own minds either, but they were in possession of one piece of knowledge of decisive importance. Why did they still keep it concealed from me? On 29th October the fleet was in fact to have sailed out to fight the decisive battle. On 31st October this order was in fact withdrawn as the result of the mutiny, and on 4th November we were invited to issue leaflets in order to dispel 'the Legend of the Death Cruise.' It is true the Admiralty had not expected the destruction of the fleet, but its victorious return. The démenti was in this sense formally justified, but was in general taken to mean—and was intended to be so mis-

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people and not only the Government. *We are not putting an end to the war between the nations in order to start on a Civil War.* It is the height of unscrupulousness to spread fantastic rumours with the object of causing unrest and kindling the flames of Civil War.

Grievances are to be investigated, all justifiable demands to be fulfilled.

But the Government is equally bound to employ all the means at its disposal to protect the people from the misery which would result from an utter dissolution of all Order; it is bound to act in accordance with law and equity; this is implied in the full responsibility which it bears before the whole people and their elected representatives in the German Reichstag.

SEAMEN! WORKERS!

Are you aware of the responsibility that you have in the eyes of your fellow-countrymen? Do your best to secure that the *melancholy events of the last few days* remain isolated incidents, so that we may *be free as law-abiding citizens* to put our own house in order, *without bloody disturbances, for the welfare of the German people, and your own!*

MAX, PRINCE OF BADEN. *Chancellor.* SCHEIDEMANN. *Secretary of State.*

RITTER VON MANN. *Secretary of State for the Marine.*

[1] For the events in Kiel, cf. Gustav Noske, *Von Kiel bis Kapp.*

[2] Cf. Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 265 f.

construed—that the object of the cruise was in no sense to engage battle with England but was only ' to carry out one of the usual trips which had often been made in the last few months, for the sake of keeping the men occupied.' [1]

It has been asserted before the judges in Munich by the gentlemen of the Admiralty,[2] that I had been informed in advance of the contemplated offensive of the fleet. Before I saw the statements on oath to this effect, I should have been prepared to swear for my part that no one had mentioned a single word or syllable to me. Now I am clear that Admiral Scheer, in the presence of Rear-Admiral von Levetzow, had on 20th October used words to the following effect : ' That after the withdrawal of the submarine war, the High Seas Fleet would once more be accorded complete freedom of action.' [3] But I shall never be able to regard the general terms of this remark, which cannot even have been particularly emphasized, as a sufficiently explicit announcement of an intention to engage the German fleet in a life and death struggle with the British fleet in the course of the next ten days. In any case, before the final orders were issued, the Imperial Government ought to have received precise information on the point. I cannot admit the explanation given that time and objective of the operation had to be concealed from me on grounds of secrecy. Military operations of such far-reaching political importance must not be kept secret from the Chancellor. But I am convinced that their real motive lay in a different kind of mistrust. Considerations of military secrecy could no longer be relevant when once Hipper had given up the planned offensive ; and even then I was not informed. I did not hear the truth as to the nature and scope of the proposed naval offensive until long after the Revolution.

[1] Quotation from the report of the Minister of one of the Federal States, sent off by him on 6th November on the basis of official information with which he had been supplied.

[2] Cf. among other things the statement of Rear-Admiral Heinrich in the Munich ' Stab-in-the-Back ' proceedings, to the effect that he had inquired of the Naval Command as to whether the Government had been informed, and had received an affirmative answer.

[3] Admiral Scheer, *Vom Segelschiff zum U-Boot*, p. 356.

The navy—that is my firm conviction to-day—was afraid the Government would not muster up the necessary understanding and faith to be capable of approving of such a tremendous undertaking. It is true I cannot say I should have entirely shared their optimism. Had their confidence had a basis in reality, why had Admiral Scheer moved heaven and earth to prevent the abandonment of the submarine warfare? He ought then to have *demanded* it; since in the first place the submarine war could not have such speedy results as to reverse the decision of the war; and secondly the fact that it kept a good part of the High Seas Fleet occupied and that the submarines were needed for the contemplated offensive made its abandonment a necessary preliminary to the decisive battle.

But I admit that when once the decisive battle had been determined on, it was the duty of the Naval Command to work itself up to the temper of unshakable confidence in victory. And even had I not been carried away by these soaring hopes, the following considerations would still have led me to give my assent in principle to the naval operation:

If we should win—and this, considering our leadership, the training of the crews and the superiority of our material, was not inconceivable—the hard-pressed army and the civil population whose impatience under its sufferings was daily growing, would receive a powerful impulse to hold out. After a German naval victory the revolution and capitulation of 9th and 11th November would have been almost a psychological impossibility.

But should our navy suffer a glorious defeat, yes, and even if this last cruise were really to be a 'Death Cruise,' even then its desirability from a military-political point of view must certainly be conceded. This sacrifice would have been a moral force, capable of putting to shame the many disaffected and despairing folk who would not have been able to escape its influence. I have been justly reminded of Thermopylae.

I repeat, the navy's want of confidence in me was unjustified.

It is true that had Admiral Scheer trusted me and confided to me his tremendous plan, I believe I should have done my duty as Chancellor and have implored him not to carry on a ' National Defence ' on his own, but to hold his hand until the public was clear as to the armistice terms. Not until then could it be proved that all our confidence in Wilson was a cruel self-deception—proved to the whole people and in particular to the sailors, who were generally thought to have been disaffected since 1917, and who were now to carry out their boldest and most risky operation.

To-day the navy brands with ignominy the traitors and mutineers in its own ranks, and I maintain it is right in so doing ; the mutineers in the fleet broke the back of the ' National Defence.' But the admirals of the time are not the men to cast a stone. Before a general seeks a decisive engagement he must assure himself of the reliability of his instrument—of the morale of his men no less than of the sufficiency of his material resources. The general—demands Clausewitz—must always take account of subversive tendencies in the case of a long war. The naval offensive, undertaken while the negotiations, with their hundreds of false hopes, were still in progress, was bound to be wrecked on the feeling of the crews : ' To-morrow is Peace. What is the sense of getting killed to-day ? ' It would have been a different matter had the fleet put to sea after the publication of the terms to avert an humiliation which would affect them most nearly. Under such circumstances the great enterprise might have succeeded, and might have initiated and inspired the National Rising. Had an exchange of views taken place in time between the responsible authorities, the result would presumably have been, either that I should have induced Admiral Scheer to wait or that I should have realized that technical considerations made a postponement impossible and should have tried to get out the conditions quicker, through a question put directly to Foch, in the hope of the fleet's action restoring our humbled self-respect.

To-day, when I think out all these possibilities in retrospect, I always, it is true, make one proviso, which, I know,

rests on a fond delusion : His Majesty must have worked together with Navy, Army Command and Chancellor on a basis of mutual trust, and must by his great sacrifice have enabled army, fleet and civil population to put out their last ounce of strength.

Even to-day the question why the Navy would not trust me is a riddle to me. I can only give one explanation, and that a depressing one :

Bismarck had struck the separation of the German States a mortal blow—a blow so decisive that even after the Revolution it made but diffident attempts to raise its head again. But Particularism lurks like an inborn curse in the German character, and before the war—and above all, during the war—had taken refuge in the Departments—among the admirals, among the generals, among the diplomats. They had no spirit of mutual trust, and seldom worked together as allies in a common cause, as the welfare of the nation required of them.

No Kiel, no revolution ; no revolution, no capitulation on 11th November !

To this heavy accusation the reply is continually made that the ' National Defence ' scheme was in any case senseless and purposeless.

To this I am bound to say that one must take account not only of the material resources, but also of the will of the enemy peoples. Had it for instance been a case of conquering Alsace-Lorraine, then the Allied rulers would have been in a position to impose on their peoples years more of war, now that the final victory was no longer in doubt.

But on 11th November quite another situation was conceivable. Suppose the Wilson conditions accepted ; suppose the evacuation of Belgium and Northern France, yes, and even of Alsace-Lorraine conceded—and suppose the demand for our disarmament answered by the ' No ! ' of a nation resolute to fight to the uttermost.

In this case it is my firm conviction that our will to fight a ' Struggle of Desperation ' needed but last out a

few weeks to make the enemy rue his demand for our annihilation.

From their peoples an overpowering cry would have gone up to heaven : ' Are we to sacrifice hundreds of thousands more before we are over the Rhine—simply to extort Foch's armistice conditions ? The price is too high ! ' From the home front this feeling would have leaped the gap and spread among the Allied armies, who would have had to contend with the worst season of the year and with terrific difficulties of transport. And in the end the will to take the offensive would have been extinguished.

Fresh negotiations would then presumably have been initiated. The armistice terms which we should then have had to accept would have been very hard ; but my belief is they would not have handed over Germany bound hand and foot to the dictation of the victors of Versailles.

. . . . . .

On the night of 4th-5th November fresh news reached us from Kiel. In one point it was clear enough : Kiel was in the hands of the mutineers. On the morning of the 4th the insurrectionary movement had leaped from barracks to barracks, the workers making common cause with the sailors.

At the first moment a counter-action on the part of the Governor of Kiel, Admiral Souchon,[1] seemed as if it would be successful ; he had succeeded, according to his own report, in partially disarming a band of mutineers on the march, whereupon the rest threw their arms away. But a few hours later the revolt had broken out on all sides, and made an ' impression of having been deliberately prepared over a long time.' ' The sailors got possession of the arms including four machine-guns, and attacked the Detention Barracks guard, reinforced though it had been. The great majority of the guard refused to shoot.' Souchon estimated the advancing mob at 2000 well-armed men, so that ' the

[1] The Officer Commanding the Mediterranean Squadron who was responsible for the escape of the ' Goeben ' and ' Breslau ' to Constantinople.

movement could only have been put down at the cost of considerable bloodshed.' The Admiral would not have shrunk from that, but ' reports were received from a large number of naval detachments, among them from the battalion of Marines which yesterday was reliable enough, to the effect that these troops were no longer to be trusted.' In the conviction that the remainder of the troops would be insufficient to suppress the movement, the Governor at 3 p.m. on the afternoon of the 4th received deputations from the detachments which had mutinied ' including the Third Squadron,' and asked them what they wanted ; members of both the Social Democratic groups were present.

The following minute was taken of this conversation :

> ' The wishes of the deputations from the Third Squadron and from the Naval Detachments are being heard by the Governor of Kiel. This evening Herren Haussmann and Noske will arrive in Kiel to inquire into the wishes of the Squadron and of the Detachments. The wishes of the deputation are in particular for :
>
> 1. An amnesty for the men of the Third Squadron now undergoing punishment.
>
> 2. The investigation of the question as to who was the first to shoot in the bloody encounter of yesterday, and the punishment of the guilty.
>
> 3. The abandonment of the Naval Attack alleged to have been planned.'

A lurid light was thrown upon the relative position of the forces in Kiel by the following words of Souchon : The first of these demands, he wrote, for the liberation of the men undergoing punishment had had to be conceded at once, ' even before Haussmann's arrival.' The newly-formed Soldiers' Council took official part in the liberation. Only so, in the Admiral's view, could an attack on the Detention Barracks be prevented.

At 9 o'clock in the evening of 4th November a further meeting took place in the Government Buildings ; our envoys, Haussmann and Noske, who had arrived in the meantime, also took part. The Baltic Station sent us the following report of the proceedings :

'KIEL,
5th November, 1918.

I. Result of the meeting, held at 9 p.m., 4th November. *Present*—Herr Haussmann, Secretary of State, the members of the Reichstag Mission, the Governor and the Representatives of the sailors and of both Social Democratic parties. It is conceded that :

1. The Governor will issue orders sending the military who have arrived in Kiel and those who are still *en route* back to their garrisons.
2. The Governor agrees to the setting up on 5th November of a Commission consisting of the Deputy Provost-Marshal, Dr. Eichheim, and of one representative each of sailors and workers, to investigate which of the men undergoing detention in the Detention Barracks, inclusive of those detained pending inquiry, are to be set free according to the terms of the agreement which has been reached.
3. The Governor will use his influence with the Ministry of Marine or with the Command of the High Seas Fleet as the case may be, to secure that the ships of the Third Squadron visit Kiel once more to take on board the crews of the ships that remained on land.
4. The Government Representative, Herr Haussmann, declares that in his account to the Government of the conditions he has found here he will do his utmost to secure that the Government at once issues an Amnesty Decree giving legal freedom to all political prisoners, in particular to those under sentence for rioting and detained in Celle and Cologne. On Point One, request in this sense has already been made to Naval Command, Ministry of Marine, and Ninth Corps. On Point Three, it is requested that orders in this sense be issued to Third Squadron.

II. The newly-formed sailors' organization professes to have news that Wandsbeck Hussars are on the march and are keeping the Governor on the railway station as a hostage until certain denial of this report reaches them. Inquiries are being made.

III. Telephone and telegraph exchanges are under the control of the new organization, which is aware that a complete interruption of communication may have the most serious consequences.'

The last part of this telegram had obviously been sent

under pressure from the insurgents. For the next twenty-four hours the news that reached us was vague and alarming ; its origin, too, was often obscure.

In the meantime we became clear that in our immediate neighbourhood another centre of infection was active and exerting an uncanny influence—the Russian Embassy. Suspicions had been multiplied in the course of the last few weeks : the courier service was remarkably active, there were rumours of extensive smuggling of arms ; Russian agitators had been speaking at meetings of the German Independent Social Democratic Party ; the recalled attaché, Semkoff, it was reported, had boasted at a farewell dinner of having poured millions of money into Germany for the support of the revolution which was shortly to break out.[1]

On the evening of 4th November the Russian courier's packing-case went to pieces on the Silesian Station according to plan. Solf reported on the morning of the 5th that it had brought insurrectionary documents to light, whose contents were as compromising as one could wish—incitements to revolution and assassination. We now had the handle we wanted to deal with Joffe and his staff of expert revolutionaries. We resolved on the evening of the same day to inform the diplomatic representative of Russia that he was to leave Berlin next morning with the whole staff of the Embassy. Till then the Embassy would be placed under police supervision.

Scheidemann declared at the meeting that Bolshevism to-day was a greater danger than the Entente. Every one of us was, I think, impressed by the necessity of strengthening the Majority Socialists against the Independents.

[1] On 4th November I received alarming news from East Pomerania, describing how Bolshevist doctrines had been spreading even among the rural population. The author, Richard Skovronnek, wrote to me ' that the country labourers had for weeks been discussing the partition of the big landlords' estates on the Russian plan.' They were only waiting for the return of the troops from the front. ' The doctrine that only the " rich " are to suffer from our defeat, while the " poor " may even profit by it, as the result of a general partition of property, has—thanks to an unscrupulous agitation—eaten so deeply into the heart of the people that tremendous efforts would be necessary to root it out again.' Cf. too Miliukof, *op. cit.* p. 153 f.

The *Vorwaerts* wrote on the morning of 5th November :

> ' But their strongest argument is always to the effect that not a Person but a System is at stake—that it is not a question of William II. or a Regent, but of Monarchy or Republic. This is perhaps in some sense becoming true. A short while ago the idea of a change in the occupant of the throne was attractive even to many who were monarchists on principle, because they hoped by such a change to guard against a more radical movement. This possibility doubtless existed and perhaps still exists even now. But " the dead ride apace," and often the " revolutionary " solutions of to-day are the conservative solutions of to-morrow.
>
> The Social Democratic Party is in principle a democratic party, but—*vide* Bebel—it has never attached decisive importance to the *mere form* which the representative headship of the State may take. *The prospect of our young Republic having to measure swords with royalist Don Quixotes for thirty years perhaps, and having to see its essential internal development thus held up, is not one of the most attractive.*[1] But when once the question of the form of Germany's constitution becomes acute, no one will doubt which side German Social Democracy will take, having regard to its whole past traditions.
>
> Thus the policy of our opponents on the Kaiser question will perhaps prove to be once more a policy of lost opportunities, unless at the last moment a solution should still be found.'

No one could fail to recognize the sincerity and the urgency of this appeal for help. It was the expression of a truly desperate situation, out of which the Majority Socialists could only escape through action on the part of the Kaiser. But headquarters were in a fighting mood. In a telegram of 5th November [2] Herr von Gruenau wrote : ' The Kaiser now shows but little inclination to return to Berlin ; this is to be explained by the state of feeling which Herr Drews' mission produced here.' I was informed that the Kaiser was to visit the different parts of the front, one after the other, to strengthen the army's power of resistance. General Groener had arrived that morning. It is true that on his departure from Spa he had received permission to promise a return of His Majesty within twenty-four hours ; but on the

[1] Author's italics.

[2] *Vide infra*, p. 300 n.

station in Berlin a telegram reached him withdrawing this permission.

The General himself took the mere soldier's point of view on the abdication question. 'The Field-Marshal has ordered me,' he cried out in words of passion before the assembled ministers,[1] 'on the question of the Kaiser's abdication, to tell you in his own words that according to his feeling it would be the act of a scoundrel for him to desert the Kaiser; and that, gentlemen, is my feeling too, and the feeling of every soldier with a sense of honour. How are the thousands and tens of thousands of gallant officers and soldiers to bring themselves to make the supreme sacrifice, if you drive the wedge of a divided allegiance into their hearts and consciences. There is one thing of which you gentlemen at home seem to have no inkling, and that is the psychology of the Army—the imponderable factors on which discipline is based. If the agitation against the Kaiser is not put a stop to, the Army's fate is sealed; it will simply break up. In the soldiery which will then stream back home all the bestiality of human nature will break out.'

Here no compromise seemed to be possible. Was it really true that army and civil population had lost all understanding for one another?

Haeften and Wahnschaffe made one more attempt to bridge the gulf. They arranged for next day a meeting between General Groener and representatives of the Social Democrats—in particular the Trades Union leaders whom Groener had learned to respect in the course of the common work of former days. The General, they thought, must thus be brought to see that the country was in danger of immediate collapse; while they hoped that even the workers' representatives would hesitate when Groener described to them the feeling of the army. The same day I myself tried in vain to convince Groener in private conversation of the necessity of the Kaiser's abdication. He treated the very discussion of this question as showing a lack of feeling for the front and stopped his ears to all reasoning. It seemed almost as if he

[1] At the meeting of 5th November, *Amtliche Urkunden*, No. 100.

must have formally bound himself in Spa not to give way under any circumstances. And yet the picture which he gave the Cabinet of our military situation was as black as could be. He had made a written report which he then read out :

> Our great offensive had aimed at breaking the ring that encircled us at its strongest point. The attempt had failed. The collapse of our allies had followed to an extent and with a suddenness which we had not anticipated. The enemy were thus free to move their line of encirclement up to our own frontier. There could be no doubt as to their aim : *the surrounding and capitulation of the German people.* We should have to count on the Rumanians renewing the war and on the Czecho-Slovaks and other peoples who had formerly fought among our allies, giving active support to the operations of our enemies. " Passive support in the most definite form is already required of them by the terms of armistice." Bolshevism was seconding the military operations of our enemies, and from East and South-East was penetrating people and army. The situation appeared to demand concentration of all our military forces. The withdrawal of our troops in Hungary and Rumania had already been ordered. But it was possible that they would have to cut their way through. It was still impossible to see how our troops could be got out of Asia Minor. Groener still did not want to evacuate the East yet ; it would mean that Bolshevism would get a hold on the districts given up and threaten our country at close quarters ; but in the event of a continuation of the war there would certainly be no alternative to the withdrawal even of these troops for the defence of the home country. And then he warned us, just as General Hoffmann had done,[1] against overestimating their fighting quality. Before they could be put into the line in the West, they would have to be subjected to a severe course of training lasting over a considerable time.

The momentary situation on the Western front was described by Groener as follows :

> The withdrawal of the front to the line Antwerp—west of Brussels—Charleroi—River Meuse had become necessary. But he understood the objections which had formerly prevented this fateful decision from being taken.

[1] At the meeting of 17th October, *vide supra*, p. 105.

1. Till a short while ago there had been in the district to be evacuated 80,000 wounded and enormous supplies of war material of all kinds.

2. The railway situation, already extremely critical, would be made more so by the withdrawal of the front, which involved the loss of a close-meshed network of railways. It would be possible to supply the most pressing daily needs of the troops in their new positions, but it meant practically the end of all quick transfers of troops behind the front.

3. Apart from this, every step backwards led to a restriction of our economic life and this prejudiced our war industry more than anything else.

But the decision had to be taken in clear recognition of the inevitable consequences, ' because our first duty is and remains that of avoiding under all circumstances a decisive defeat of the army. When once the enemy breaks through, the danger of such a defeat is there, since the Supreme Command no longer disposes of reserves of the necessary fighting quality.'

As the result of this falling back of the Northern sections of the army to the given line Groener would only hold out the prospect of avoiding serious engagements for perhaps a fortnight, and thus giving the exhausted troops a little rest. But since the new line was not finished building, the military situation as a whole would not be improved.[1]

Payer tried to make Groener state how much longer we had before we should have to capitulate. Groener refused to give any definite answer : ' We can certainly manage to

[1] In the ' Stab-in-the-Back Proceedings ' General Groener in giving evidence described in great detail the situation he found on the Western front on taking over. His first impressions were that it was high time to try and disengage from the enemy, quicker than had been done, and retire to the Antwerp-Meuse positions ; even before that, he had continually wondered why we had not months ago taken up a shorter line, why we had not dug ourselves in, so as to form reserves massed in depth out of the troops gained by the shortening of the front. At the time when he took over the command there were in fact no more reserves left. Ludendorff and the rest of his entourage had evidently had no great hopes of being able to put up a resistance on this line, since they had done nothing to dig the positions nor to extend the railways. He would also have shortened the left wing, given up Alsace and based the flank on Strassburg. But when he inquired of the Supreme Command what the position at Metz and Strassburg was, he was informed that we no longer had any guns there. (*Der Dolchstossprozess in Muenchen October-November*, 1925, *Eine Ehrenrettung des deutschen Volkes*, p. 215.)

hold out long enough for negotiations,' he said. If we were luckier, the time might be longer, if we were unlucky, shorter. This must determine the course of the negotiations from a tactical point of view, and was what led him to seek to maintain the closest touch with the Government. Erzberger asked what period General Groener regarded as the minimum that could be expected, should all the possible unfavourable circumstances be realized at once. The Government must not be put into such an embarrassing position a second time. The General answered that at the moment a retirement on a great scale was in progress, and that this had gone off well and had been favoured by fortune up to now. It all depended on whether considerable enemy pressure was brought to bear, and especially on whether at one particular very important point all attacks that might be made could be repulsed. The General was thinking of a danger-point north of Verdun [1]— he begged us to be patient a few days till the operations in question were concluded.[2]

In the afternoon Haussmann appeared in the Cabinet and made a lively and accurate report in Groener's presence.

[1] Cf. Ludendorff's statement of the afternoon of 17th October, *vide supra*, p. 140: 'It might become dangerous if we were to suffer a defeat before Verdun; otherwise he did not think the danger so very great.'

[2] In this report of 5th November, 1918, the view which General Groener later expressed in detail in the Munich case was only hinted at: 'In any case we were too late with our retirement to the Antwerp-Meuse line— the more so because a few days afterwards the great danger which I saw coming had taken shape. The position could be held provided the troops generally stood firm. But one thing must not be allowed to happen: the American Army—or any considerable portion of it—must be prevented from advancing north of Verdun; the moment the fresh troops, who were far superior to our completely exhausted troops, advanced, it would be impossible to hold the position for long. That is what then actually happened. After 1st November the Americans kept advancing further and further.' In his view the left wing of the enemy would gradually have pushed forward against Aix-la-Chapelle, and the right wing north of Verdun, and we should have been very soon compelled to give up the Antwerp-Meuse line in the face of this encirclement. Whether the enemy march could then have been brought once more to a standstill west of the Rhine was not clear, but in any case a final resistance could have been organized behind the strong barrier of the Rhine; this he was resolved on, should the worst come to the worst. (*Der Dolchstossprozess*, p. 215 f.)

Late in the evening Noske rang up Payer, and gave a provisional sketch of what had happened. Thus we were able to trace in bold outline a picture of the situation in Kiel.

One thing was clear, that Noske had arrived in the nick of time to avert Bolshevist chaos in Kiel. All power had slipped from the hands of the Naval Authorities, the mutineers had paused for a moment, perplexed and planless, before the ruins of authority—leaders they had none. When Noske arrived at Kiel Station, he was received with jubilation. The troops sent by the G.O.C. Ninth Corps Reserve were equally received with loud acclamations—and disarmed. Then quick as lightning Noske recognized the chance and the responsibility which the people's confidence gave him. 'I have been obliged to accept the post of Governor,' he said on the telephone, 'and have already had some successes.' The man had in fact accomplished miracles. The patrol service on the Baltic which had been interrupted was again restored—'they do not want the English here,' he reported. Noske could have added that, before he came, there was no trace of any feeling of responsibility for the security of the country to be found among the mutineers. The naval authorities worked on, in spite of their humiliating position. The town, in which senseless shooting had kept causing fresh outbursts of panic, quietened down in the course of 5th November: 'I have brought the shooting on the part of the crews to a stop, and the officers have been induced to give up the shooting too.' He hoped to be able to get his demand that the men should give up the arms they had appropriated, carried out; he was personally responsible among others for their safe-keeping. But his power did not extend to the insurgent ships. In the course of 5th November Red Flags went up on the mast-heads all over the bay. The Commander of the 'König' was shot trying to protect the German flag. 'Schlesien' alone sought to avoid disgrace by flight.

Haussmann and Noske were as decisive as possible in rejecting military help. In this point they were supported

by naval officers on the spot.[1] The dispatch of the military, they said, would not repress the revolt, but would extend it. They were afraid of the uncanny contagion which the mutiny had shown, after they had seen with their own eyes the troops sent to Kiel letting themselves be disarmed. Our two envoys were agreed that we had but one hope—a voluntary return to order under Social Democratic leadership; the rebellion would then gradually die down of itself. It was true that the Independents were at work to keep the insurrection alight; but now the Trades Unions were opposing them and supporting Noske. On all sides—he reported—he noticed the inborn German feeling for order re-awakening among workers and sailors.

Neither did Noske leave any room for doubt that his position as leader was based on the sailors' belief that he would protect them and make himself the spokesman of their principal demands—for the abdication of the Kaiser and the amnesty for the mutineers of to-day and of 1917. The reports from the naval authorities had only stated generally that political demands had also been made. Only from Noske's and Haussmann's words did we learn that the Kaiser's abdication was one of them, and had in fact been given first place. Noske inquired as to the Kaiser's decision, and made a categorical demand for the amnesty—he declared in fact that he must have it by midday of 6th November, otherwise he could remain in Kiel no longer.

In the Cabinet Mann and Erzberger made serious objections to the granting of the amnesty; Scheüch likewise put up a violent opposition. 'We must not say we will not at least catch the ringleaders. . . . The powers of Military Authorities were regulated by military principles; we cannot take up a line which compels them to depart from these principles.' Erzberger demanded that proclamations should be dropped over Kiel by aeroplane, threatening severe punishments and denying that Haussmann had given any

[1] Simons read a telephone conversation he had had with Commander von Twardowski to the effect that the town was now quiet, that Noske had been appointed Commandant; the Commander had urgently advised against military measures being taken.

promise of an amnesty. In opposition to him Drews warned us against any sort of lengthy operation ; if the Kiel affair were not wound up quickly, we should break down at some other point. Haussmann assured us that the line Noske had taken would be the quickest to attain the desired end ; one could not fall upon him in the rear. Noske still believed that with the amnesty he would be able to bring the men back to duty. The Minister of Marine, supported by Erzberger, implored us to take the way of force : ' As things now are, the workers and soldiers have everything their own way. Telephone and telegraph are being controlled. . . . Here an example must be made. Kiel cannot be starved out. It must be attacked in force and bombarded from the sea.' This proposal to use the Red Fleet to restore order was obviously impracticable. But a military expedition against Kiel was equally out of the question at this stage for various excellent reasons :

First : The mutineers in Kiel were estimated at 40,000 men, and they well-armed, well-fed and well-rested sailors. Noske had warned us against any attempt to make a military attack on the town. ' Such an attack would merely be a useless massacre, the 40,000 men in question could not be overpowered, and the attempt would make all efforts to reach an understanding fruitless.' Even the War Minister considered the troops at our disposal too weak for such an attempt.[1]

Secondly : The G.O.C. Ninth Corps Reserve was already urgently demanding military protection for other places on the coast. Five hundred sailors had landed at Lubeck.

Thirdly : For the suppression of the insurgents there were in the whole of Germany nothing but reserve formations to be had. The War Ministry's view as to the value of these formations is expressed in a note written by an officer of General Scheüch's staff :

[1] General Scheüch : ' Military forces at present too weak. Insurrection thus not at present to be suppressed by force of arms, for the present prevent spreading, occupy railways and roads. When once we get more forces, possibility of attack to be considered. Mistake to talk now of Conditions and Amnesty, we must not give way to the men.'

> ' All the men who were in any degree fit for fighting service had been combed out of these formations to bolster up the tottering Western Front. These reserve troops were now nothing but bloodless consumptive phantoms without any solid value.'

The last few days had shown that the troops of the Ninth Corps Command, for instance, were found wanting wherever they had been entrusted with any serious task :

> ' Were they sent against the mutineers they retired at once, generally without a struggle, capitulated and handed over their arms and either declared themselves " neutral " or deserted.'

But if the War Minister refused for the moment on the ground that the troops at his disposal were neither reliable nor numerous enough, he did not by any means object in principle to a military undertaking against Kiel, only he did not want to make the attempt with inadequate forces. On 31st October he had insistently demanded that the Supreme Command should send some reliable troops home, basing himself on a promise given by the Supreme Command to his predecessor at the time of the January Strikes :

> ' In case of need, self-contained detachments from the Army in the Field will be put at the disposal of the War Minister for the suppression of internal disturbances.'

On 2nd November this demand had been repeated with all possible emphasis, but not till that day did Scheüch ultimately receive word that the Second Division of Foot Guards was to be entrained for Altengrabow. The War Minister urged that their dispatch should be pushed forward, and demanded that a further Division should follow.

Thus at the moment we had no choice but to deal with the Kiel situation as follows : 1. To cordon off the area of contagion ; 2. To give Noske a free hand in his attempt to stifle the outbreak on the spot.

The Minister of War requested the General Officers Commanding Reserves in the neighbourhood of Kiel to occupy the roads and railways of the neighbourhood. ' Order ' them he could not—his title of ' Commander-in-

Chief at Home' was misleading, since his powers only covered certain particular questions falling under the Law of the State of Siege.[1] He did not receive authority over the G.O.C. Reserve Districts till the evening of 8th November, on making urgent representations to His Majesty to create a Superior Command at home. On 5th November the G.O.C. Reserve Districts took orders only from the Kaiser, who in consequence of his absence in Spa was not in a position to establish the necessary co-operation between them.

The idea of isolating the contagion that went out from Kiel, by cutting the arteries of communication, was all right as far as it went—but how much of the Kiel poison might not already be coursing in the blood of the German people? The Red Fleet was riding on the Baltic; the waterways could not be cut, and we already had news of the landing of insurgents at other places on the coast. Noske received next morning the authorizations which he had demanded. When Scheidemann told him on the telephone of the Cabinet's decision, Noske said he was near breaking down. The Town Commandant of Kiel had been shot in the night. The noisiest talkers were horror-stricken.

[1] Restrictions on the Freedom of the Individual; Censorship; Restrictions on the Rights of Assembly and of Corporations.

CHAPTER XII

GROENER'S CONVERSATION WITH THE LABOUR LEADERS. MY PACT WITH EBERT AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ULTIMATUM

On Wednesday, 6th November, Groener's forecast of the situation was even blacker than on the preceding day. I met him first of all in the garden. Immediately on his arrival the Kaiser had communicated to him his own view that we should now be obliged to take the direct channel from army to army, in order the sooner to ascertain what the armistice conditions would be. But on 5th November Groener was still unwilling to identify himself with this suggestion, which as a matter of fact had also been addressed directly to the Foreign Office.[1] Now he informed me personally that we should have to cross the lines with the white flag. 'But not for a week at least?' I said. 'A week is too long a time,' General Groener answered. I asked once again: 'Anyhow not before Monday?' Groener replied: 'Even that is too long to wait, it must be Saturday at latest.'

[1] His Majesty's Royal Train,
5th November, 1918.

The request for His Majesty's return communicated by His Excellency Herr von Delbrueck has been laid before His Majesty and has to-day been supplemented by the personal report of Freiherr von Lersner, in my presence, on the basis of the verbal instructions received by him from the Imperial Chancellor.

The Kaiser has not yet finally decided on the attitude he will take up to it, as in the meanwhile General Groener too has been negotiating with you on the point in question.

The Kaiser has at present little inclination to return; this is to be explained by the state of feeling arising out of Herr Drews' mission and by his view that we shall still have to wait some time for the armistice conditions.

His Majesty believes in fact that we shall only learn the conditions as the result of a démarche from '*Army to Army*'; this point, too,

In Groener's presence I informed the Cabinet of this fearful disclosure. Groener added in explanation :

> ' I too had hoped we should be able to wait eight or ten days till we had taken up our position on the [new] line. After all inquiries I have made in the meantime as to the position in Kiel and the Tyrol, and the state of feeling at home, especially in Bavaria, with its far-reaching political consequences, I have come to the conclusion, that, painful as it is, we must take the step of asking Foch.' [1]

The gloomier view of things which he took to-day Groener thus ascribed to the condition of things at home. We had presumably told him of the danger signals that were coming from Bavaria ; and the General was dismayed by the report Haussmann had given him under the immediate impression of the successful revolt. The General was sceptical as to the value of the defensive measures which we had discussed in his presence, and he was even then convinced that ' Field-grey will not shoot at Field-grey.' But his pessimism was not to be traced to the tottering home front alone. At the very same time the Americans were making progress at the point—viz., north of Verdun—where they must not be allowed to advance if the Antwerp-Meuse line was to be held any longer. It was evident that Groener on 6th November already saw it had become necessary to retreat behind the barrier of the Rhine. He still counted on being able to

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General Groener has to-day been instructed to discuss with you. Even should the armistice make no progress, the Kaiser still wishes the peace negotiations with Wilson to go on.

General von Marschall urges, with regard to further Tours of Inspection at the Front, that the one undertaken yesterday shows the necessity of re-establishing touch with the troops. The Generals and their Staffs had not expected any further visits from the Kaiser after the recent events, and were of the opinion that the Kaiser was deserting his army. This had had a very depressing effect on the Corps of Officers. It is essential for the stiffening of the army's resistance and for the success of its defensive efforts in the future, that the Kaiser should visit the various sectors of the front one after the other.

No further dispositions will be made till after General Groener's return.

GRUENAU.

[1] For the Meeting of 6th November I make use of Conrad Haussman's notes, which comparison with the Official Minutes has always shown to be reliable. For 6th November I could not find any other minutes.

organize a last resistance there, if the worst came to the worst; the ascertaining of the conditions did not for him necessarily involve their acceptance. After his dispiriting announcement he added the words: 'Increasingly severe conditions are to be expected, we shall see, when the time comes, whether we can and whether we have to accept them.' It seemed he was chiefly concerned to ease by the step from army to army the intolerable tension which was rendering it more and more difficult for army and home country to hold out.

About midday, as had been arranged, the Social Democratic Party Leaders and Trades Union officials arrived at the Chancellery for their conversation with General Groener. Scheidemann, Bauer, Legien, Robert Schmidt, David, Suedekum and Ebert had put in an appeareance—and Haeften, too, was present at the meeting.[1] At the very first moment, I was told, the old feelings of confidence were renewed. They seemed to say,[1] We, Labour Leaders and General, have already proved that we can work together in loyal partnership for the welfare of the country. We have now come to renew this partnership. Groener is our last hope. Should he fail, the State is doomed.

The meeting began with a trivial incident which I mention as typical for the relation—with its good and bad sides—obtaining between the members of the party and the leader they had sent up into the Government. Scheidemann was called to the telephone, whereupon the Reichstag Deputy, Herr Suedekum, remarked in a loud whisper: 'Hush, Philip is governing!'

Ebert was the first to speak: The present was not a time, he said, to allot the blame for the general collapse. Popular opinion blamed the Kaiser, whether rightly or wrongly was a matter of indifference. The main thing was that the people wanted to see the men it considered were to blame removed from their high places. Thus if the masses were to be prevented from going over into the revolutionary camp,

[1] Haeften reported to me personally on this discussion; he also at my request submitted a written account of it.

the Kaiser's abdication was indispensable. He proposed that the Kaiser should announce his abdication next day at the latest, and name one of his sons, Oskar or Eitel Friedrich, as his deputy. The Crown Prince was so well-hated by the masses as to be now impossible.

Groener's reply was short and sharp : Abdication was out of the question ; at a moment when the army was engaged in a fierce struggle with the enemy, it was impossible to deprive it of its Supreme War Lord. The interests of the Army must be put before all others. Thus he must refuse in the most categorical terms to take any step whatever on the abdication question or to make any representations to the Kaiser in this sense.

David and Suedekum pleaded : That they had no objection to the Monarchy itself, and that this step would by no means involve the abolition of the Monarchy in Germany ; large sections of the Social Democrats would be perfectly content to have a Monarchy with social-reformist leanings and governing on a Parliamentary basis.

In the course of David's rather academic disquisitions Scheidemann returned. He was white with excitement.

' Further discussion of the abdication is pointless, the Revolution is in full swing. In Hamburg and Hanover sailors from Kiel have seized the helm of State. Gentlemen, the present is no time for discussion ; now it is time to act. We cannot be sure that to-morrow we shall still be sitting in these chairs.'

Ebert preserved an unshakable calm : ' Nothing decisive has happened yet. Unlike the other gentlemen I am a convinced Republican—not only in theory—but I, too, would put up with a Monarchy on a Parliamentary basis and with a social-reformist tinge. Once more, Mr. General, I strongly advise you to seize your last opportunity of saving the Monarchy and take immediate steps to have one of the Imperial Princes entrusted with the Regency.'

Ebert was supported by Suedekum ; with tears in his eyes he appealed to the General to accept Ebert's proposal, otherwise a fearful catastrophe with consequences that none could

foresee would overtake us. Legien too addressed himself imploringly to Groener.

The General stood firm; the proposal was for him quite out of the question he said. He was authorized to announce that all the Princes had unanimously made a Declaration to the effect that were their father to abdicate against his will, they would all refuse to take over the Regency.

Thereupon Ebert said: 'Under the circumstances any further discussion is superfluous. Events must take their course.'

Then turning to Groener: 'We are grateful to you, Your Excellency, for this frank exchange of views, and shall always have pleasant recollections of our work with you during the war. We have reached the parting of the ways; who knows whether we shall ever see one another again.' [1]

The others took leave without a word. Their faces were very grave. When they had left the room there was silence for a while; then Haeften spoke to Groener: 'This means Revolution. These leaders here no longer have the masses in hand.' He at once begged Groener to recall him: 'My place is with the Army,' he said, 'now that we are moving towards Revolution.' Groener replied: 'You must stop here.'

Meanwhile President Wilson's answer to our last Note had been made known to us by wireless—it was not officially transmitted till the following night.

Foch was prepared to receive properly accredited representatives of the German Government and acquaint them with the armistice conditions.

The conditions were to ensure to the Allied Governments the unrestricted power of securing and enforcing the details of the peace which the German Government had accepted.

The Allies accepted the Fourteen Points together with the principles expressed in the subsequent utterances of the President. They made two restrictions, however:

[1] Groener's statement in the 'Stab-in-the-Back Case' (*op. cit.* p. 218). 'And thus I confess myself entirely to blame for not having taken up Ebert's proposal that day—for not having at once said to Ebert: "Herr Ebert, I take your word for it, we will stand by one another. . . ." Perhaps had I done so, the Monarchy might still have been saved.'

The condition ' Freedom of the Seas ' they rejected, and the condition ' Evacuation and Restoration of the Occupied Territories ' they interpreted as follows : Germany to pay compensation for all the damage to life and property occasioned to the civil population of the Allies by her attacks by sea, on land and in the air. President Wilson declared his adherence to this interpretation.

The Note brought with it the certainty that the worst of armistice conditions awaited us.[1] It gave us the Agreement of the Fourteen Points—in any case a very considerable protection, but an insufficient one, if Wilson did not stick to his word. Both contents and tone of the answer could only strengthen our doubts as to his good intentions and as to his power to give them effect. Still, at the moment, our prevailing feeling was one of relief that at least the *Army* would not have to wait upon Foch.

[1] The text of Wilson's note of 5th November is as follows :

In my Note of 23rd October, 1918, I advised you that the President had transmitted his correspondence with the German authorities to the Governments with which the Government of the United States is associated as a belligerent, with the suggestion that if those Governments were disposed to accept peace upon the terms and principles indicated, their military advisers and the military advisers of the United States be asked to submit to the Governments associated against Germany the necessary terms of such an armistice as would fully protect the interests of the peoples involved and insure to the associated Governments the unrestricted power to safeguard and enforce the details of the peace to which the German Government had agreed, provided they deemed such an armistice possible from the military point of view.

The President is now in receipt of a memorandum of observations by the Allied Governments on this correspondence, which is as follows :

The Allied Governments have given careful consideration to the correspondence which has passed between the President of the United States and the German Government. Subject to the qualifications which follow they declare their willingness to make peace with the Government of Germany on the terms of peace laid down in the President's address to Congress of January, 1918, and the principles of settlement enunciated in his subsequent addresses. They must point out, however, that clause 2 relating to what is usually described as the Freedom of the Seas, is open to various interpretations, some of which they could not accept. They must, therefore, reserve to themselves complete freedom on this subject when they enter the Peace Conference.

Further, in the conditions of peace laid down in his Message to Congress on 8th January, 1918, the President declared that invaded

Groener came to me once more before he left the same afternoon. At his suggestion I appointed Erzberger Government Representative on the Armistice Commission.[1] He was to leave to-day for Spa, thence to continue the journey together with General von Guendell, our diplomatic representative, Count Oberndorff, Captain Vanselow of the Navy, and Major-General von Winterfeldt, as soon as touch with the enemy had been established. I wanted to let loose to the public the very same night the news of the Armistice Commission's departure. Groener agreed to this attempt to quiet the masses by announcing the speedy cessation of hostilities as certain. The General was shaken to the depths by his conversation with the Trades Union leaders. The Revolution had come within striking distance.

For him as a soldier the Kaiser's abdication remained out of the question, but he saw another honourable way out, and the need of the moment impelled him to speak—the Kaiser should yield up, not his throne, but his life, or at least should venture it in the field. Would not that sacrifice have power to pull the people together once more, when the terrible conditions were made known, and to silence the pitiful cry of the agitators: 'The Kaiser is to blame'? I was convinced that His Majesty's entourage would prefer even the abdication to this.

On the afternoon of 6th November the Cabinet met to discuss the revolutionary unrest. The town of Kiel gradu-

territories must be restored, as well as evacuated and made free. The Allied Governments feel that no doubt ought to be allowed to exist as to what this provision implies. By it they understand that compensation will be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and to their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea, and from the air.

I am instructed by the President to say that he is in agreement with the interpretations set forth in the last paragraph of the memorandum above quoted. I am further instructed by the President to request you to notify the German Government that Marshal Foch has been authorized by the Government of the United States and the Allied Governments to receive properly accredited representatives of the German Government, and to communicate to them the terms of an armistice.

ROBERT LANSING.

[1] Cf. Erzberger, *op. cit.* p. 326 f.

ally calmed down. Noske was at the end of his strength, but he stuck it out, and garrison and town obeyed his orders. *However, our efforts to cordon off the centre of infection had been unsuccessful*; not only by water, but also by land sailors forced their way into the towns of the 'Water's Edge' with the intention of spreading the insurrection. A new front—the Northern front—was in process of being formed.

The course of events in Lubeck was typical. On 5th November four warships appeared in the bay; the sailors occupied the General Post Office, the station and the military stores. They issued a proclamation demanding the abolition of the military dictatorship and an immediate armistice. They further urged the population to remain calm and threatened looters with the death penalty. The troops that were at hand did not dream of taking any risks to protect the authorities; at the most they remained neutral.

In the same way and on the same day the sailors took possession of Brunsbuettel at the mouth of the Elbe. Next day Cuxhaven and Hamburg made their revolution. The G.O.C. Reserve District left Altona in the hope of being better able to organize resistance from without. At the same time he reported that his troops were unreliable, and that he no longer had any authority in Hamburg. The excited masses felt themselves irresistible after the 'victorious' sailors had told them how the troops of the Ninth Corps had refused to shoot. Already the prisons had been opened by the insurgent crowd. The mutineers had occupied the railway stations of Hamburg and Altona, and put forth demands for the recall of General von Falk, the recognition of the Soldiers' Council and the handing over to it of Transport and Food Distribution.

The War Minister was still without any active service troops, which alone were of any value for an offensive undertaking. On the morning of 6th November he was informed that the Second Division of Foot Guards had arrived in Cologne, and that the further division which he had demanded was entrained and under way. All depended on whether we succeeded in confining the insurrection to the Ninth Army

Corps District till the active-service troops arrived. Would the other G.O.C. Reserve Districts be able with the Reserve formations to master the situation until then ?

From Hanover came ugly reports, whose significance was, however, still doubtful. Scheüch had as yet no fear for Berlin. The troops on the spot would suffice in the first instance to beat down an insurrection, provided that the soldiers could be trusted ; and on this point he seemed to have no doubt. On 3rd November, on the occasion of a discussion at the Brandenburg District Headquarters, the Commanders of various formations stationed in Berlin had declared their unqualified confidence in the reliability of their troops.

Scheüch informed us of the measures which had been taken by the Berlin military authorities. Companies with ten or fifteen officers had been formed, the town divided up into districts, the battalions inconspicuously quartered in private houses. All ranks of Army and Navy belonging to the Ninth Army Corps District were forbidden to enter Berlin or the Province of Brandenburg. Strong guards were posted on the stations of Neustadt an der Dosse and Rathenow to hold up all trains. The station guards in Berlin had been strengthened and ordered to arrest all sailors arriving in Berlin.

The G.O.C. Brandenburg District had taken special precautions for the next day—7th November—was the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Drews declared his confidence in the Berlin Police.

Scheidemann came in from the Reichstag. There the Parliamentary Party and the Party Executive of the Social Democrats had been holding a joint session. Groener's refusal had obviously had a decisive influence upon the course of the discussion ; Scheidemann told us we must in any case reckon with an official *démarche* on the abdication question. At the moment there was a struggle between two currents of opinion ; a section of the party insisted on an ultimatum with a time-limit, the other was content for the Party Committee openly to express its approval of the letter

addressed to me by Scheidemann. Scheidemann said the Kaiser question was threatening to become a question of Monarchy or Republic, if it did not receive a speedy solution. The excitement of the workers was great, he hoped that they would be quieted by the imminent conclusion of the armistice—but that was only to be expected provided the abdication had taken place by then.

The Secretary of State for the Navy suggested the immediate formation of Civil Guards and Peasant Guards—that was perhaps the only means of avoiding internal collapse. The military alone would hardly be able to master a movement which was spreading so rapidly—these were the words of Ritter von Mann who only the day before had been for an attack on Kiel in force. I arranged a meeting at the Imperial Ministry of the Interior for the following morning to bring about as soon as possible the necessary agreement on Mann's proposal between the various authorities concerned. Even before the meeting instructions in this sense were to be communicated telegraphically to the provincial Presidents of the Prussian provinces.

Towards evening the resolution of the Social Democrats was submitted to me. It had just been possible to stave off the Ultimatum, but only by a hair's breadth :

> ' Parliamentary Party and Party Committee demand that the armistice be carried into effect without delay. They further demand an amnesty for military offences and remission of punishment for troops that have committed breaches of discipline. They demand without delay the democratization of the Government as well as of the Civil Services of Prussia and of the other Federal States. The Parliamentary Party and the Party Committee instruct the Party Executive to inform the Imperial Chancellor that Parliamentary Party and Party Committee emphatically approve and support the step taken by the Party Executive on the *Kaiser question* and expect a speedy solution of this question.'

Groener was on his way to Headquarters ; he had no intention of advising the Kaiser in the sense of my policy. The armistice conditions might reach us any day. The spirit of revolt was abroad in the land, and the revolutionary

ferment grew from hour to hour. 'The Kaiser will not make the sacrifice,' was the war-cry of the men who were plotting the social upheaval. When would the Majority Socialists take up this cry?

The situation seemed in fact desperate. But I was bound to admit to myself that one last resource had not been tried. Chancellor and Kaiser must meet. I determined to start for Headquarters next morning.

But first I wanted to let two of the Social Democrat leaders into my secret and ask them whether they could keep things quiet in my rear for a few days. I chose two men for whom in a moment of national danger party considerations simply did not exist—Ebert and David. I hoped to get an undertaking that they would ward off the pressure of an ultimatum from their party as long as I was at Headquarters.

I did not consider my task in Spa a hopeless one. Ever since Sunday I had been thinking over a solution which would save the Kaiser from simply having to yield to the clamour of the streets. His Majesty would first of all name a Deputy. Then a new Reichstag would be elected as soon as possible, and define its attitude to the constitutional question arising out of an abdication; and then finally the abdication itself would take place. Even this course would be hard enough for the Kaiser to take, considering the light in which he regarded his high office; but at least it would be less intolerable than for him simply to have to give in to the daily demands of the *Vorwaerts* and of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.

The words 'Constituent National Assembly'[1] were in every mouth since the day when the Danube Monarchy had fallen apart and German Austria's desire for reunion with the Empire had made itself felt. This slogan, I was convinced, was to-day the only one capable of keeping the insurrectionary movement in check. To combat the Revolution we must conjure up the democratic idea. Would the Social Democrats follow me on this course? I believed they

[1] As far as my recollection goes, the words were first used by the *Vossische Zeitung*.

would, and was confirmed in this belief by a passage which had stood in the *Vorwaerts* of Sunday, 3rd November :

> ' But our wish is not to *compel*, but to *convince* ; any compulsion which may be felt and whose existence we do not dispute is not due to us but to the facts of the situation. It goes without saying that we should not have the least objection to a democratic solution, and if an agreement could be reached on the basis of submitting the whole question as soon as possible to a *Referendum* we should not have the least objection to such a course.'

In the newspapers of 7th November there was a Wolff message to the effect that on the afternoon of the 6th the German Delegation had left Berlin for the West for the conclusion of an armistice and the initiation of peace negotiations. The meeting with the enemy was expected to take place on Friday, 8th November.

This communiqué was accompanied by the following proclamation :

> ' An Appeal by the Imperial Chancellor to the German People.
>
> Berlin,
> *6th November*, 1918.
>
> Official.
>
> President Wilson has to-day informed us in answer to the German Note that the Fourteen Points, in which he last January summed up the conditions on which he would make peace, have with the one exception of the Freedom of the Seas *received the assent* of his Allies ; and that the *Armistice Conditions* will be communicated to us by Marshal Foch. This makes possible the simultaneous initiation of
>
> *Peace and Armistice Negotiations.*
>
> In order to put a stop to the bloodshed the *German Delegation for the Conclusion of an Armistice* and for the opening of Peace Negotiations has to-day been appointed and has started on its journey westwards. The successful course of these negotiations is being seriously endangered by *Disorders* and Breaches of Discipline.
>
> For more than four years the German people has borne the heavy sorrows and sacrifices of the war in a spirit of *concord* and order. If at the decisive moment, when only an *unbroken*

unity on the part of the whole German people can avert the greatest dangers for its future, the inner forces of its soul fail it, then *the consequences of such a failure will be incalculable.*

The maintenance of the Order which has hitherto obtained in a spirit of willing Discipline is the need of the hour and the demand which any popular Government must make upon its people.

May every Citizen be conscious of the grave responsibility for the future of his people which the duty of fulfilling this task lays upon him.

THE IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR,
MAX, PRINCE OF BADEN.'

When the Press comments were laid before me I was at once horrified by the language of the *Vorwaerts*. It is true it supported my appeal and implored the workers not to let themselves be tempted from the path of ordered democracy; but the anti-revolutionary line was no longer drawn with the same distinctness.

'At the "Water's Edge" events have taken place of which the whole world is talking, even though no complete or connected report of them has yet reached us. No one on whom the idea of the New Age has dawned, can help feeling his solidarity with the masses—even in cases where he is not able to approve of every single turn of events.'

This was rather a mild way of censuring mutiny and murder! This was the 'Byzantine Adulation of the Masses.'[1] Was the party behind this article?

In the early morning I spoke to Ebert in the garden alone. First of all I told him of my intended journey.

'You know my plans,' I said. 'If I succeed in convincing the Kaiser, can I count on your support in fighting the Social Revolution?'

Ebert's answer was unhesitating and unequivocal:

'Unless the Kaiser abdicates, the Social Revolution is inevitable. But I will have none of it; I hate it like sin.'

[1] A phrase of Max Weber's. I regard it as a misfortune that I did not make Max Weber's acquaintance till after the war. In 1919 we together founded the 'Heidelberg Association.' His warnings during the war went parallel with mine. (Cf. Max Weber, *Ein Lebensbild*. By Marianne Weber. Tübingen, 1926.)

After the Kaiser's abdication he hoped to bring round party and masses to the side of the Government.

We touched on the question of the Regency. I named Prince Eitel Friedrich, as the Regent for Prussia and the Empire indicated by the Constitution. Ebert declared on behalf of himself and his party that on these constitutional points no difficulties would be put in the Government's way.

Then in words which betrayed his emotion he wished me success for my journey.

David whom I saw directly afterwards was no less decided in his opposition to the revolution. He was convinced that should I put things through in Spa, we should then be able to master the internal situation.

I believed I had concluded not only a Treaty to tide me over a few days but an Alliance backed by a common determination to save the country from revolution.

I had instructed one of my political associates immediately after our conversation to sound David on his attitude to a Constituent Assembly. There followed the characteristic answer : ' The election would put my party in an awkward situation. As Republicans we should have to agitate for the Republic, whereas many of us would prefer a democratic Monarchy.

If Germany became a Republic we should have to spend our time doing battle with the Royalists. That would be no particularly pleasant prospect either.'

In the meantime the deliberations in the Ministry of the Interior were going on. There were there assembled representatives of the Prussian Government, Navy, Military Authorities, the Ministry of Railways, the Chief of Police. The Plenipotentiaries of the Federal States had also been summoned. The Secretary of State for the Interior reported upon the revolutionary movement : [1]

At Kiel a certain degree of order had been restored under Noske's leadership.

[1] Cf. the maps at the end of the book showing the spread of the revolution.

At Hamburg the situation had got worse. The Independents had put themselves at the head of the movement; Haase himself had been in Hamburg since the 6th. Their demands were in part of a social-revolutionary nature. The insurgents had compelled the dispatch of a train loaded with thousands of armed men who to-day were to 'get things going in Berlin.'

Wilhelmshaven had held out till to-day. That morning, however, a message from the Commander of the Naval Base had been received to the effect that the forces at his disposal were insufficient.

From Schwerin came the news, confirmed by the Mecklenburg Minister in Berlin, that the Civil Government had been as good as eliminated.

Most uncomfortable of all was the news from Hanover. Ships' crews had gone there and overpowered the town. There it had not been a case of 'the military machine being overcome by a kind of paralysis' as had occurred elsewhere. Here General von Haenisch, a man of exemplary energy, had attempted a trial of strength. A vigorous attack by reserve troops, who had remained loyal, upon the sailors occupying the station, had been ordered and carried into execution, but 'it was a total failure.' The last telegram received stated that the General Officer Commanding had himself been taken prisoner. Train-loads of insurgents were arriving from Hanover.

The Minister of Railways at once arranged with the military authorities the counter measures to be taken; on the lines from Hanover and Hamburg the metals were to be taken up in various places; the Lehrte Station was occupied in force.

The Berlin Chief of Police reported that an 'extensive' operation had been planned for to-day. The insurgents had had the intention of seizing the prisons and the Police Headquarters. But till then nothing had happened; the Independents had obviously been reduced to a sort of helplessness by Joffe's departure. He assured us that to protect Berlin, the most detailed measures had been taken by

police and military. Among other things five meetings called by the Independents had been forbidden.

The reports on the course of the revolutionary movement up to that point were bound to convince the assembled company that the reserve formations—at any rate in the provinces—were not equal to their task.

The Minister of the Interior was now strongly in favour of Mann's proposal to form Civil Guards. He was supported by the Minister of Railways, Herr von Breitenbach. He admitted that organizations of this kind would obviously be able to do nothing against the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in places ' where the worst has already happened.' But the Civil Guards should undertake the task of preventing the spread of the movement to places hitherto untouched, especially the country districts and the small towns.

This evoked the protests of the Ministers of the Federal States which were particularly threatened—the Ministers of the Hansa towns, of Mecklenburg and of Brunswick. They said the Civil Guards might well supplement the military but must never on any account be regarded as a substitute for them, even where it was only a question of preventive measures.

The deliberations culminated in the question which was being put with growing impatience and anxiety : ' When is help coming from the front ? ' The military gave us a confidential reply, based on the following facts, which gave the key to the situation :

> ' The only Active Service troops in the neighbourhood of Berlin were three Jaeger Battalions and two Squadrons of Dragoons. The division of infantry temporarily quartered at Altengrabow had been entrained for the Western Front and the mixed brigade of infantry which the War Ministry had organized to be made up in the East had found employment elsewhere. But the Supreme Command is now thoroughly awake to the seriousness of the internal situation. The Second Division of Foot Guards is being transferred to Altengrabow and will be east of Essen by to-morrow. Now that Hanover is lost, it must be brought round via Halle. A second Division is also under way and further troops are promised.

A complete Army Headquarters is also being sent to take over the General Command of operations against the mutineers. The drafting of reserves from home to the front is to be stopped.

At the same time a further meeting took place which was also a part of the defence against Bolshevism, and whose *mise en scène* brought the first signs of Revolution into the Government Offices.

About twenty sailors had appeared as representatives of the Third Squadron, accompanied by Admiral Feldt. The Minister, Herr von Mann, resolved to hear their demands. He hoped, he said, to begin with the Third Squadron and roll back the movement from there.

There was nothing insolent in the appearance of the men ; they had the obvious intention of making explanations and excuses, even of repairing the damage done, so far as they could. Haussmann was present throughout the discussion as representative of the Cabinet and took short notes of what the different sailors said :

' The speeches of the officers showed their opposition to the new Government.'

' Tremendous concentrations of ships roused our suspicions.'

' Rumour said that the naval attack was intended to cause a break-down of the armistice negotiations.'

' The incidents in Kiel were simply an attempt to free the prisoners.'

' We at once said there would be a row if the men were punished.'

' The Red Flag was flown in self-protection to avoid being fired on by the Kiel Forts, which were in the hands of the Soldiers' Council.'

' We want to keep the Fleet in fighting condition.'

' Our confidence in the Command is unshaken.'

A sailor from the ' Markgraf ' : ' We will bring over the rest of the ships. The Third Squadron is what counts.'

' Are we to take orders from the Government or the Soldiers' Council ? '

' Have the Squadron-Leader's orders against Red Flags been suggested or been approved of by the Ministers ? '

Only a small fraction of the men's demands was of a political nature. They demanded : The right of assembly, freedom of circulation for all newspapers, the abolition of saluting when off duty, the same food for officers and men and a revision of the punishment regulations—the powers of an officer to punish to be restricted and a representative of the men to be heard, for offences which were not in any way dishonourable only fines and not detention to be given. They desired that a representative of the men should be attached to the Squadron-Leader for the period of transition.

Haussmann made an appeal to their conscience ; it was no longer merely a question of discipline but of being loyal to Germany. Any agitation against the Government's peace policy was a crime. ' We can still do much at the Conference table, but only if we are sure of a backing from you. Clemenceau desires the impoverishment of Germany, Wilson her recovery. If once signs of decay show themselves in Germany, Clemenceau will win. The Government has already beaten the reactionaries ; that is the meaning of Ludendorff's dismissal.' [1]

The Conference broke up, I was told, with a promise of good results.

The attitude of the sailors of the Third Squadron was a standing proof of all that Noske had accomplished at Kiel. Germany's fate depended on Ebert's repeating the rôle of his ' comrade ' on a large scale—on his ' rolling back ' the movement in the country as a whole. After our conversation of the morning I no longer had any doubts of his goodwill—nor indeed of his power—once the word was spoken which would enable him to draw again the sharp line of distinction to his left. Disquieting news had reached the Chancellery as to the various threads that were being spun between the Party Executives of Independent and Majority Socialists. As long as the Kaiser hesitated, the forces behind the twin Socialist parties tended to mingle. If my plan succeeded, it would be once more possible to make a clean

[1] I do not know what Haussmann actually said. The above is reproduced from a sheet of notes which he took with him.

cut between them. All depended on Berlin remaining quiet in the meantime.

From this point of view I was sorry that the G.O.C. Brandenburg District had forbidden the Independents' meetings, but the War Minister convinced me that at such a moment I ought not to do anything to obstruct Linsingen.

At five in the afternoon Wahnschaffe burst into my room with the news that Scheidemann and Ebert had rung up from the Reichstag and demanded to be received at once. They were going to bring me an Ultimatum from their party, containing the following Five Points :

1. Immediate permission for the forbidden meetings to be held.
2. Instructions to be given to the police and military to exercise the greatest discretion.
3. The Kaiser and Crown Prince to renounce the throne before Friday midday.
4. The Social Democratic influence in the Government to be strengthened.
5. The Prussian Government to be re-organized and brought into line with the Reichstag Majority.

These demands to be fulfilled by noon of to-morrow, Friday, or the Social Democratic Ministers would resign.

The two leaders arrived soon after. In the words of explanation they gave was nothing of the menace and defiance which from the contents of the Ultimatum might have been expected. They had been simply overwhelmed by a sudden panic at the way in which power was slipping from their hands.

' The Kaiser must abdicate at once or we shall have the Revolution '—this was the substance of the short explanation they gave.

I told them that the whole foundation of my Chancellorship had broken up ; I quickly put an end to the conversation and was filled with indignation and bitterness.

My journey had become purposeless.

One of my colleagues, directly after the Ultimatum had

been handed me, spoke to David on the telephone. 'What a disloyal thing to do! You concluded the compact with the Chancellor only this very morning!' The answer was: 'No good; I regret the developments just as much. Events have been too strong for me.'

I wanted to avoid acting in anger and so instructed Simons to give the Social Democrats their last chance of coming to terms. He was to drive to the Reichstag, meet Ebert and try to induce him to make a formal withdrawal of his Ultimatum and to take steps to have it kept secret. I authorized Simons to promise that I would in this case still undertake my journey to Spa that evening.

Simons soon returned. Ebert had rejected the honourable line of retreat offered:

> 'This evening there are twenty-six meetings taking place in all the big public halls. This evening we must announce the Ultimatum from every platform or the whole lot will desert to the Independents.'

Ebert was a changed man. Simons encountered an unexpected determination; Ebert seemed all at once to be reaching out his hand to grasp the leadership of the State. This impression was so strong that it led Simons to ask: 'Then I suppose you want to be Imperial Chancellor?' Ebert replied: 'That has not yet been decided.'

Immediately on Simons' return I summoned the Vice-Chancellor Herr von Payer and told him I should at once request His Majesty for leave to resign. He was deeply moved, but appeared convinced of the consistency of such a step. I instructed him to represent me in the Cabinet which had just assembled, and to inform my colleagues of my decision.

Then I drafted the following request:

'BERLIN,
7th November, 1918.

TO HIS MAJESTY THE KAISER AND KING,

Your Majesty knows that the so-called War Cabinet has, in spite of my most earnest and insistent warnings, for some time been making the August Person a subject of discussion.

This occurred for the first time in my absence. But after Your Majesty's Secretary of State, Herr Scheidemann, had informed me in writing that his party expected me to advise Your Majesty's abdication, and after my efforts to induce him to withdraw his letter had been in vain, I was obliged to define my position.[1] I therefore read the Cabinet a declaration to the effect that I would neither permit pressure to be exercised upon Your Majesty in the question of abdication nor would myself yield to such pressure in advising Your Majesty.

Your Majesty's departure for General Headquarters, decided on as it was without my knowledge and carried out against my advice, rendered continuous communication with Your Majesty very difficult. On the other hand any absence from the capital on my part must inevitably involve considerable difficulties. In spite of this, having regard for the situation as a whole and after the most mature consideration, I had determined to set off this evening on a journey to Your Majesty in order to supplement the information with which the Ministers Delbrueck and Drews, acting on my instructions, had supplied Your Majesty. However, this afternoon Scheidemann and Ebert brought me in the name of the Social Democratic Party an Ultimatum, containing among others the demand that the news of Your Majesty's abdication be announced to the people before to-morrow afternoon.

My efforts to convince the two party leaders of the fatal nature of this demand from the point of view of the Fatherland were fruitless. The party leaders are convinced that this very night in Berlin riots on a great scale will break out unless they can at least console the masses with the prospect of such news. They refused to withdraw the Ultimatum and on the contrary, moved by anxiety at the growing power of the Radicals, are firmly resolved to reap a tactical advantage from the fact of its having been put, by publishing it this very evening.

In these circumstances it is impossible to preserve the unity of the present Government any longer. The majority of the members of the Cabinet and of the Secretaries of State take up an attitude of opposition to the Social Democratic step. Since I can only administer the affairs of the Empire so long as I enjoy the confidence and support of a solid majority in the Reichstag, and since as Imperial Chancellor I am obliged to hold fast to my decision not to allow any pressure to be put on

[1] The letter had, I think, been formally withdrawn but the public had in fact got wind of its contents.

me in the matter of the August Person, I therefore beg Your Majesty in the spirit of the deepest reverence most graciously to relieve me of my office as Imperial Chancellor.

I naturally regard it as my duty to retain in my hands the conduct of Imperial Affairs in this time of stress until the decision is taken, especially as the armistice negotiations which are in progress might be endangered by breach in the continuity of government.'

The Cabinet came together. The first point to be discussed was the prohibition of the Independent meetings. The War Minister supported the G.O.C. Brandenburg District, whose confidence must not be shaken at a moment like this, as it would be if in the last resort the permission was to be given. He must be allowed a free hand.

Drews suggested that the principle of the central authority interfering as little as possible with the local authorities' freedom of action could not be maintained in times like these.

Scheidemann interrupted the discussion with the question : ' Has the Cabinet been informed of the action we have taken at the Chancellor's ? '

Payer authorized Scheidemann to tell the Ministers.

Scheidemann went on : ' The prohibition of the meetings occasioned a fresh discussion of the total situation. The military authorities' order prohibiting the formation of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils provoked universal merriment. It had about as much sense as an order forbidding it to rain to-morrow. On the other hand the prohibition of the meetings has had a provocative effect. After my conversation of yesterday with Herr Drews, I had supposed the meetings had been allowed and that no control would be exercised over them. To my astonishment I find to-day that they have been forbidden ; the Government must take the responsibility for this, as the *Vossische Zeitung* justly says. This renders our position intolerable. It is one more proof that the military are going to work on lines of their own, independent of us. After this morning's conversation between Ebert and the Chancellor it seemed as if a *modus vivendi* could still be found but the prohibition of the meetings and the headlong course of events have changed all

that. The events in the coast towns and in Hanover show that in some parts of the Empire revolution is in full swing. Then, too, the measures which have been adopted in Berlin, such as the stationing of soldiers with fixed bayonets and of machine-guns on the Lehrte Station have caused increasing embitterment. Thus a total situation which compels us to face the gravest decisions has been brought about. The last few evenings the masses have only been kept quiet by the extraordinarily skilful intervention of Herr Ebert. It will no longer be possible to keep them in hand, unless certain definite demands have been fulfilled. We have therefore been instructed by the Party Executive of the Social Democrats and by the Parliamentary Party to put the following ultimative demands to the Chancellor :

1. Permission to be given for to-day's meetings which have been forbidden.
2. The police and military to be cautioned to use the utmost discretion.
3. Renunciation of Kaiser and Crown Prince by Friday midday.
4. The Social Democratic influence in the Government to be strengthened.
5. The Prussian Government to be re-organized according to the programme of the Reichstag Majority Parties.

Unless we receive a satisfactory answer by midday Friday, the Social Democrats will leave the Government.

The Government has up to now done little else than talk. The subordinate authorities go on their old way, and often put up a passive resistance against our decisions. Every time we came to the conclusion that the removal of this or that person was necessary, we received the answer that such removal would be a long and difficult matter. If we want to prevent the unrest taking really serious dimensions, we must step in and show our people that we are working in their spirit. To-day's decision to go to the Chancellor was a terribly hard one for us to have to take ; but now we are convinced that the Chancellor will never on his own account make up his mind to urge abdication upon the Kaiser, we

have been obliged to act ourselves. The Kaiser is reported to have said to Herr Drews : " I will only yield to force." If the abdication does not now take place, it will very soon be a question of Republic or Monarchy. I implore you to realize the real seriousness of the situation.'

Payer : ' The Chancellor, after a detailed consideration of the situation produced by the Social Democratic action will request the Kaiser for leave to resign.'

Scheidemann : ' That is for us a matter for the deepest regret. The Chancellor has our full sympathies. Only we have the feeling that on the question of the Kaiser he has not shown the necessary determination.'

Payer : ' The Chancellor has not left the Kaiser in doubt as to the truth of the situation.'

Then Payer turned excitedly on Scheidemann : The Social Democratic party, he said, ought to be aware of the tremendous responsibility it was taking upon itself by making such demands at this hour of crisis—the most critical and the gravest which Germany had ever experienced. The resignation of the Social Democrats would involve the break-up of the present Government. As far as the meetings were concerned, obviously anything of a provocative nature must be forbidden. They could not possibly look on and see the revolutionary movement keep on spreading. If they remained passive, Berlin would suffer the fate of Hamburg, Hanover and the rest. The meetings would go on and their proceedings become more and more provocative, till Bolshevism was the result. The Bolshevist revolution could not be kept at bay by mere words, however excellent. The Social Democrats ought to think of their responsibility before history. ' As regards the behaviour of the subordinate authorities it ought to be clear that a huge administrative apparatus cannot be altered all of a sudden. We ought not to take every trifling symptom so seriously.'

Scheidemann retorted : ' We have done all we could to influence the masses. If the masses have grown restive on the question of the Kaiser, it was in the first instance bourgeois papers like the *Frankfurter Zeitung* which have brought

this about. You can still keep the masses in hand by making concessions. The Government may resolve what it likes, but the Prussian bureaucracy does not care a rap for its resolutions. Herr von Payer speaks of the heavy responsibility we take upon ourselves in coming to this decision; but it ought to be stated frankly that it is the Kaiser who must shoulder the heaviest responsibility of all. He must have known weeks ago what he was called upon to do. I think there is no one in the Cabinet who would not have felt a weight fall from his mind, if only the Kaiser had done the right thing in time. Already he is generally regarded as having been to blame for the war. If he actually said: "I only yield to force," that makes matters worse. There can be no doubt what the end will be. I don't know whether the younger men will shoot; the old soldiers certainly will not.'

Here Payer, Trimborn, and Scheüch left the meeting to make a summary report to me, and ask me what I thought of a possible withdrawal of the Order against the meetings. I adhered to the War Minister's view that considerations of prestige and technical considerations made it impossible now to reverse the General's decision.

Meanwhile in the Cabinet the indignation which the bourgeois members of the Cabinet felt at the Ultimatum broke loose:

'The demand of the Social Democrats,' Count Roedern said, 'for the renunciation of Kaiser and Crown Prince is, having regard to the time-limit which it sets, incapable of fulfilment. The Social Democratic Party will have to bear the responsibility before the bar of history of having left Germany to appear at the Conference table without a Government.'

Haussmann: 'The whole way the Social Democrats have gone about this matter is an insult to us. It is driving a wedge into our majority. At the moment when we are setting about reforming Prussia, you break everything up. If you were going in for abrupt action of this kind, why did you not tell us so?'

Scheidemann began to waver. 'That was simply due to want of time; we did not have the decisive meeting till this afternoon. The pace of events has been overwhelming. An Ultimatum with a time-limit was absolutely necessary—otherwise the movement would carry us off our feet. I cannot admit the justice of Count Roedern's charge. The state of things which he paints—a Germany without a Government—can only arise as the result of the Chancellor's resignation. We are all very sorry the Chancellor intends to draw such a consequence; but the interests of the country obliged us to do what we have done.'

Payer became more and more violent. There Scheidemann was mistaken, he said. The Empire could only be saved if the Majority Parties stood together. But the action of the Social Democrats made co-operation with them almost impossible for anyone with a grain of self-respect. 'Among educated people you can't behave like that. Herr Scheidemann's idea of fixing up the abdication by telephone before to-morrow is quite out of the question. I should equally reject any such proposal if I were in the Chancellor's shoes.'

Solf warned us of the effects my resignation would have abroad. It would be said universally that even the Prince had no more belief in Germany's future. Solf proposed as a compromise that the time-limit should be extended to three days, till the armistice was formally concluded.

Scheidemann was ready to do all in his power to avoid my resignation. 'The Government need not break up,' he said, 'if only the Chancellor remains. It is our conviction that Germany will suffer a revolutionary break-down unless the Kaiser abdicates at once.'

Then followed the memorable words: '*Should he abdicate, we believe we can guarantee a favourable development of the situation.* We have staked our reputation and till to-day have been true to our undertakings.'

And now came the devastating admission: 'But I must follow the resolutions of the party. Why should the Prince draw any consequences! He must not do this. He must stay.'

Count Roedern : ' What is the Chancellor to do ? Are you equally prepared not to draw the consequences you threaten till the armistice agreement has been signed ? '

Scheidemann answered : ' I will make the following proposal :

1. The Kaiser to receive an immediate report on the situation.
2. Neither Chancellor nor we draw the ultimate consequences till the armistice is concluded. I will try to induce my party to accept this proposal, but cannot guarantee being successful.'

Payer, Roedern and Solf come to me and urge me to withdraw my request for leave to resign.

I told them that I could not go against my deepest feelings, and drafted the following declaration for Payer to read in the Cabinet :

' I have acquainted the War Cabinet with my position on the question of His Majesty the Kaiser's abdication in my declaration of 31st October, 1918.[1]

Since then I have taken further steps to enlighten His Majesty on the situation. I had the intention of leaving for General Headquarters this evening to report to His Majesty the Kaiser personally. I informed Herr Ebert of my plan this morning.

Now, however, after the Social Democratic Party has addressed to me an Ultimatum demanding the Kaiser's abdication within twenty-four hours, it is quite impossible for me to continue in my office and I have therefore telegraphed to His Majesty the Kaiser a request for leave to resign.

At such a moment, however, I feel it my duty to express my very great regret at the step which the Social Democratic Party has taken. At a moment in which the armistice is being negotiated with the enemy, and the longed-for peace is hourly expected, this resolution of the Social Democratic Party comes and rends Germany asunder.

I took office as Imperial Chancellor because my name rang of reconciliation abroad, and I was anxious in virtue of this fact to put my services at the disposal of the German Fatherland. If only I have succeeded in contributing anything towards the

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 240.

conclusion of armistice and peace, then I shall leave office in a spirit of the deepest gratitude and in the consciousness of not having fought in vain.'

After Payer had read this declaration to the Cabinet, Scheidemann replied to it: 'I am exceedingly sorry the Chancellor has taken the step he has. We came to our decision only after mature consideration; *this* step has been decided on in five minutes. I most earnestly hope that nothing will come of it. Meanwhile I have had a conversation with Herr Ebert. He told me that our demands had had an extraordinary effect in calming down the workers. They have promised to remain quiet till the decision has been taken. You, gentlemen, and the Chancellor, too, must really admit that we have done everything we could to keep the masses in hand.'

The same evening I received the G.O.C. Brandenburg Command in the presence of the War Minister. In Berlin all was still quiet. 1500 sailors had forced their way through at Neustadt an der Dosse, but only 300 of them arrived at the Lehrte Station and were at once arrested. Since news had been received that afternoon that suspected persons—both military and civilians—were trying to reach Berlin, not only from Hamburg and Hanover but from all sides, the whole passenger traffic to and from Berlin had been stopped by order of the military authorities. The question as to whether he was absolutely certain of being able to hold Berlin, Linsingen answered with a decided affirmative. He had not many troops at his disposal, but what there were were quite good. He would in certain circumstances it is true have to take strong measures, even to use artillery. I did not place any restrictions whatever on his action. Scheüch too viewed the situation in Berlin with confidence, he had a special faith in the 4th Jaeger Regiment. I accepted these assurances given by the military, but I was well aware that we should have to prepare ourselves for both of two alternatives—either the troops would be puting down a Bolshevist rising with the moral support of the Majority Socialists and the masses that stood behind them, or they

would be pitted against an overwhelming popular movement, designed to force the Kaiser to abdicate.

In the first case we should be putting down revolts, in the second carrying on a regular civil war. I realized from my own annoyance at the action of the Social Democrats, how tempting it was to let oneself be driven into taking up an aggressive attitude towards them ; I therefore felt bound to send, late the same evening, the following warning in the wake of my request for resignation :

'BERLIN,
7th November, 1918.
(Received 8th November.)

FROM THE IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR,
TO FREIHERR VON GRUENAU,
FOR HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR AND KING,

In the situation produced by the Social Democratic action I beg to submit to Your Majesty the following consideration :

The abdication of Your Majesty and the renunciation of the throne on the part of His Imperial and Royal Highness the Crown Prince under the pressure from the Social Democrats—both are demanded before midday Friday in the Party leaflet circulated this evening—I have always regarded as involving danger to the Dynasty and the whole idea of the Empire ; I have therefore exerted myself to the utmost to avert this danger both by taking steps to inform Your Majesty and by action in the War Cabinet. An even greater danger however would in my view be involved in a Government without the participation of the Social Democrats or in avowed hostility to them ; such a Government could now only take the form of a Military Dictatorship, which must inevitably end in bloody civil war and the dissolution of the whole organism of the German nation in Bolshevism. The mere attempt to carry out such a plan would be doomed to failure, since the troops would mostly go over to the insurgents. I therefore regard it as my duty to warn Your Majesty most emphatically against taking any such step.

Your Majesty's very humble and obedient subject,

PRINCE MAX OF BADEN,
Imperial Chancellor.'

I let the night pass before following it up with the proposal by which I intended to reserve to the Crown some remainder of dignity and initiative, while making it possible for the Social Democrats to remain in the Government.

The decisive question for His Majesty in taking his decision, must be : Will my sacrifice save the country from revolution or not ? In other words : What is the Social Democrat guarantee worth ?

Scheidemann had just repeated in the Cabinet the solemn promise : ' We will keep the masses in hand if only the Kaiser abdicates.' It is true I had grown sceptical of his promises. He had also during the Cabinet meeting become involved in contradictions which made it hard to place entire reliance on his bona fides. Scheidemann was informed of my conversation with Ebert—this much he had let out—and had all the same defended the Ultimatum of the Social Democrats on the ground that ' the Chancellor would never of his own accord make up his mind to induce the Kaiser to resign.' There was something fishy about this !

But my confidence in Ebert remained unshaken. The man was determined to resist the Revolution with all the force of his unquestioned authority. That night I pictured to myself the course of events pretty much as they must have occurred. The words ascribed to the Kaiser ' I only yield to Force ' had done their work. Scheidemann's temperament, always impatient of restraint when he smelled Revolution in the air, had been alarmed at the news from the country, at the measures taken by the military on the Lehrte Station, in fact, at the general state of tension prevailing in Berlin.

Ebert's confidential disclosure, far from reassuring him, must only have caused offence, perhaps have given rise to the desire that it should be the Party, not the Prince, who should bring the Kaiser to abdicate. But in his mind the feeling ' we have lost our hold on the masses, unless we at once do something to conciliate them ' was certainly decisive. Then under his influence, Ebert too must have fallen a victim to the

panic and clutched at the revolutionary gesture in the hope of avoiding Revolution.

In my reflections of that night I had to repress many a doubt, but through all of them I was led back again and again to the conviction *that we had no choice but to pin our hopes to the Majority Socialists.*

CHAPTER XIII

THE EIGHTH OF NOVEMBER

On the morning of 8th November the news of the Revolution was as follows: Brunswick had gone Red on the evening of the 7th; Munich Red in the night; the Munich Ministry of War was occupied by the Workers' and Soldiers' Council, the Republic had been proclaimed, the King's abdication demanded by twelve noon. In Stuttgart the power was in the hands of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. At Cologne the provincial Government was negotiating with Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. In the night a trainload of sailors had been derailed at Paulinenaue; the sailors were marching on Berlin.

Worst of all was the news from Bavaria. Here was a new outbreak, entirely unconnected with the others—a sign that the infection was now coursing through the whole body politic.

Haeften kept headquarters informed of the spread of the movement.

From a close associate I received the following warning:

> 'The spread of the revolt through the length and breadth of the country is no longer to be avoided. . . . It is owing to the success of the revolutionary movements at Hamburg and Kiel that the danger of infection is so overwhelming as it is. We must be prepared for civil war. The question of to-day is: Who is going to win it?
>
> There can be no doubt that Bolshevism will for the moment get the upper hand all over the country, unless indeed the popular Government is able to dispose of the necessary loyal troops. And that is unthinkable until the question of the Kaiser has been dealt with. The mass suggestion: "The Kaiser is to blame!" provides a point of contact between the insurgents and the troops who are expected to put them down.

We shall see wholesale desertions, even on the part of troops who have proved their loyalty at the front.

The Majority Socialists have acted rashly in issuing their Ultimatum ; but they really are not in a position to remain any longer in the Government unless the question of the Kaiser is settled. Should the Kaiser remain, the Majority Socialists are to-day bound to join the revolutionary movement, if they are not to let the Independents and the Spartacus Group have it all their own way with the masses. On the other hand, when the question of the Kaiser is once solved we can be quite sure that the Majority Socialists will put their whole organization and propaganda resources at our service for the fight against Bolshevism.'

Thereupon I had my positive proposals telephoned to the Kaiser :

'BERLIN,
8th November, 1918.

The Imperial Chancellor begs to submit the following observations on the situation for the immediate consideration of His Majesty :

To enable the old Social Democratic Party to remain in the Government and to prevent the masses going over into the radical camp it is necessary to wrest from the Independents and the Spartacus Group that slogan whose suggestive power over the masses will grow when once the armistice conditions become known—just as it grew when the unfavourable interpretation of the Wilson points was published.

And here I do not advise the acceptance of the Social Democratic Ultimatum, but the upholding of the Monarchical principle by means of a solution still more democratic than that of the Ultimatum :

His Majesty would at once declare his firm determination to abdicate as soon as the armistice negotiations have reached a point which permits of the issue of writs for the election of a Constituent National Assembly. Such an Assembly would have to determine the new forms of constitution which should have ultimate validity for the whole German people, including those sections of it which up to now had no part in the Empire. Such a National Assembly would then regulate all the constitutional questions connected with the abdication. Till that time His Majesty would appoint a Deputy.

The above solution appears to me to offer the following advantages :

1. The Crown, far from capitulating to the Social Democrats, compels the Social Democrats to capitulate to it.

2. The question of the renunciation of His Imperial and Royal Highness the Crown Prince and the question of the Regency which such renunciation would involve is thus postponed.

3. At the elections the Monarchical cause will have the advantage over the Republican, because the initiative in holding the new elections and thus determining the popular will, will have been taken by the Crown.

4. The fighting temper of the masses will be diverted from the street to the polling booth, from illegal into legal channels; and thus the peaceable sections of the population have an increasing chance of counteracting the movement. The prospects of the Monarchists would be favourable, now that the Republicans have put themselves in the wrong by their Ultimatum.

In the meantime the situation in the Empire has grown still more acute. Reports from Munich announce that the Ministry of War has been occupied by the Workers' and Soldiers' Council; the whole town is in its power. The Republic has been proclaimed and the King's abdication demanded by midday. In Stuttgart the Workers' and Soldiers' Council has likewise seized control and demanded the King's abdication by 1.30 p.m.

WAHNSCHAFFE.'

At ten o'clock the Cabinet met with Payer in the Chair. General Scheüch reported on the military situation in Berlin. He still upheld his optimistic view of the situation. Passenger traffic had been resumed, except on the Hanover and Hamburg lines.

At the Putlitzstrasse Station soldiers with red bandoliers had collected, calling themselves a Red Guard. On the Lehrte Station troops and machine-guns had been posted against the expected appearance of armed mutineers. A continuous stream of sailors kept arriving in Berlin; they were at once arrested and kept in detention.

Ritter von Mann declared his intention of sending the men back to their ships. He expressed himself content with the result of his conversation with the twenty sailors. These were returning to Kiel to-day; he hoped to be able to

assemble the Third Squadron again. In Kiel Noske had the situation in hand. He was on the point of making a tour round the ships and believed he would everywhere be able to maintain order.

Solf reported on the confidential communications he had received as to the Bolsheviks' plans and their estimates of the successes they had achieved in the various countries. In Germany a reign of terror was arranged for December; Tirpitz and Scheidemann were on the list of the proscribed. He offered to confront Scheidemann with his informant.

Scheidemann thought he would not hear much that would be new to him; he had excellent sources of information of his own. He was to-day in high spirits. All reports that had reached him spoke of the powerful effect the Ultimatum had had on the masses. He spoke as if the Majority Socialists would win their race with the Independents. He had only one anxiety—that the troops might return in plundering hordes, and then he uttered the bold words which later found their fulfilment:

'*My party will see to it that Germany is spared the horrors of Bolshevism.*'

That morning fresh hope began to stir at the Chancellery. We were impressed by the returning power of the Majority Socialists. Ebert had grasped at the reins, and would keep the masses in hand if once the Kaiser abdicated. For a few hours we really thought he would. I had faith in the efficacy of the arguments I had urged and still more in the cogency of the events which were being announced from all parts of the country in terrifying sequence. The Kaiser had really no choice, he must choose the only way out which remained to him. His situation was truly a tragical one. But in the cry: 'German-Austria must come back to the fold and we must therefore elect a Constituent National Assembly' lay a power capable of uplifting not only our unhappy nation—cheated of victory as it had been and now threatened within its own borders—but even him who would be the first to take up this cry—the abdicating Kaiser.

Payer once more insisted, adducing weighty arguments,

that I could and must remain Chancellor, should the Kaiser abdicate. If I went, the Vice-Chancellor would go too.

My associates maintained that my mission would only be completed with the conclusion of peace. If once the Kaiser made the required sacrifice, the old Majority would come together again and I could take over the Government once more. More than that, with the proclamation of the Constituent Assembly, the Chancellor became free to reassert the idea of leadership and so re-organize the Government as to make it an efficient instrument of administration. We formed plans of sending the War Cabinet—the ' Soviet ' as we called it—home and making an end of the methods of divided responsibility which had so often crippled the executive. There was no objection against including in the Government still more Social Democrats, but these might perhaps be men of a different stamp who had made their name less by their oratorical talents than by their solid efficiency. We thought of Noske. All sorts of combinations were suggested ; I decided in any case to recall Rantzau to Berlin by telegram and send his name in to Spa as my successor. Simons on the other hand already regarded Ebert as the man for the post of Chancellor. He thought I ought not yet to retire from the scene completely ; until the conclusion of peace, which we imagined to be imminent, he thought it would be the best plan for the Kaiser to appoint me his Deputy.

In the light of the subsequent events all these ideas and reflections may be discounted as symptoms of the last blissful hour before the end. But I still hold firmly to the belief that had the Kaiser taken the saving course I had marked out for him—before the evening of the 8th, or even any time up to the early morning of the 9th before the masses had come out on the streets—then we should have had neither Revolution nor Munich Soviet Republic, neither Kapp Rising nor Erzberger murder. I should have been privileged to inaugurate the era of peace in a Germany which had preserved constitutional continuity. The conquests of the October Government would have been consolidated and

further steps would have been taken on the path of Reform by a process of organic development out of the past without embittering and doing violence to the conviction of millions. Then we should not to-day have two Germanies confronting each other, swearing by different flags, and seemingly irreconcilable.

About midday the following message was received from headquarters :

'General Headquarters,
8th November, 1918.

Your Grand Ducal Highness' two telegrams [1] on the inner situation have been received. I reserve My decision as to Your Highness' request for leave to resign, until the armistice has been concluded and the hostilities terminated. Further decisions will be determined by the resulting situation. In any case I request Your Highness to remain in office till then.

WILHELM, I.R.'

Gruenau was more explicit :

'His Majesty has flatly refused to consider Your Grand Ducal Highness' proposals on the question of the Throne and considers it as much as ever his duty to remain at His post.

GRUENAU.'

We still attempted every conceivable means to get the Kaiser to realize the truth. Wahnschaffe was in continual touch by telephone with His Majesty's entourage. Groener too was rung up, but was firm in his rejection of all appeals for his co-operation. The thought that we could not convince the Kaiser simply because he was in Spa was intolerable to me.

In the early afternoon I received the news that it would be the Majority Socialists, not the Independents, who would to-morrow bring the masses out on to the streets.

The Chancellery was overwhelmed by a storm of proposals, nearly all of them based on the assumption that it would be a national catastrophe for the Social Democrats to be allowed to go into opposition. From the 'Fatherland' Party came the compromise solution that the Kaiser should make his abdication dependent on a Referendum.

[1] *Vide supra*, pp. 319 f. and 328.

In the afternoon the Inter-Party Committee busied itself with the situation created by the Ultimatum. The indignation of the other parties at the Social Democratic action—so Haussmann told me [1]—broke out again and again. But Ebert by no means let himself be driven into taking the defensive as Scheidemann had yesterday.

'You ought to be thankful to us,' he said, 'that we took action. Your soldiers have everywhere surrendered. It was only the time-limit that enabled us to quiet the masses. We were from the very beginning aware of the difficulties the Ultimatum would produce.'

On both sides there was goodwill enough to avoid a breach within the ranks of the Majority. The aged Centre Party Deputy, Herr Herold, supported the abdication in the name of his party on the ground that this was, in the view of the Social Democrats, the only way of keeping the revolutionary movement in check.

Gothein moved the following resolution :

> 'In view of the political development as a whole this Committee of the Majority Parties would regard the voluntary retirement of the Kaiser and the setting up of a Regency on behalf of his grandson as the greatest service he could render to the State, and believes that the great majority of the German people would be grateful for such an act.'

Haussmann proposed the insertion of the words : 'The decisive factor is the desertion of the troops.' Gothein's resolution voiced the view of the great majority and mere considerations of tact prevented its being accepted.[2] Stresemann did not want to commit his party ; he said, the National Liberal representative in the Government would receive his instructions. The Social Democrats expressed the hope

[1] Cf. Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 268 f.

[2] Haussmann, *op. cit.* p. 269 : Herold spoke for the Party when he said : 'We are in agreement with Gothein's resolution, only it ought not to be published.' Groeber : 'I cannot assent to Gothein's resolution ; I was not present at the party meeting.' Trimborn : 'I cannot at the moment give my support to the resolution.' Stresemann : 'We have decided to inform our representatives in the Imperial Cabinet of our decision.' Thereupon Gothein withdraws his motion to prevent it reaching the public eye as a resolution of the Committee.

that it would be made possible for them to remain in the Government. Landsberg made a statement, of whose bona fides I am still to-day convinced :

> ' We have no intention of proclaiming the Republic, because though Republicans, we are also Democrats, *and will not force the view of a minority upon the majority.*'

News was then brought me that Ebert had lengthened the time-limit up to the morning of Saturday, 9th November, and on the 8th had issued an appeal to the workers, imploring them to be patient a few hours more.

> ' WORKERS ! FELLOW-SOCIALISTS !
>
> The Government and the Majority Parties have already fulfilled a part of the demands we made yesterday. Equal Suffrage for Prussia and all the Federal States on the basis of Proportional Representation is to be introduced without delay by Imperial Act of Parliament. The immediate introduction of Parliamentary Government in Prussia is assured, as is also the increase of Social Democratic influence within the Imperial Government. The notices calling men up for military service have been withdrawn.
>
> The Kaiser question is not yet settled. Our demand for the immediate abdication of the Kaiser and renunciation on the part of the Crown Prince was made on the assumption that the Armistice would be concluded by midday to-day. This expectation has not been fulfilled because the German Delegation was prevented from reaching enemy Headquarters by circumstances beyond their control.[1] *The conclusion of the armistice would be endangered by our resignation from the Government.* For this reason the Party Executive and the Parliamentary Party have *prolonged the time-limit up to the conclusion of the armistice* in order first of all to ensure the cessation of the bloodshed and the conclusion of Peace.
>
> The workers' representatives will come together again on Saturday morning. Workers ! Comrades ! *It is only a matter of a few hours' delay !* Your strength and your resolution can bear this delay.'

In the course of the afternoon General von Linsingen sent in his resignation. He had been offended by an interference

[1] The first encounter with Foch took place on the morning of 8th November.

on the part of the War Minister. Linsingen had given orders to the Inspector-General of Aircraft to use aeroplanes against railway trains carrying sailors to Berlin. The Inspector was not sure of himself and appealed to the War Minister for his decision. General Scheüch decided against Linsingen. The War Minister's action was determined by a warning he had received on 31st October, 1918, from the G.O.C. Air Forces, General von Hoeppner, against the employment of aircraft for operations in which it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe.[1]

The situation was rendered difficult through the Order in Council giving the War Minister a superordinate Command at home not being communicated to Linsingen till the 9th, although signed on the afternoon of the 8th. I was disagreeably impressed by this clash of competence on the eve of a decisive trial of strength.

A further unpleasant symptom was reported to me : Helfferich and Radowitz, both in uniform, had appeared at the Chancellery and had given an account of their experiences at the Brandenburg District H.Q. They and a large number of other officers who were at the moment unattached had been ordered by the G.O.C. to report there ; some special defence formations were to be embodied. These officers, after waiting there for hours, had in the end nearly all been sent away again without receiving instructions of any kind. Only

[1] *Militaerwochenblatt*, No. 6, 107th year (5th August, 1922), p. 93, (Judgment of 7th July, 1922, of the Voluntary Court of Honour on the former War Minister, Lieut.-General Scheüch) : ' . . . The employment of aircraft for the suppression of the revolt was forbidden by Lieut.-General Scheüch, and was only allowed by him for propaganda purposes. This instruction was given before his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Home Army in pursuance of his powers as War Minister to issue instructions for the tactical employment of the different Arms. His decision was based on the express warning given him by the G.O.C. Air Forces against the employment of Aircraft for street fighting where the airmen would be unable to distinguish between friend and foe and might therefore do more harm than good. The employment of aircraft against the trains carrying mutineers from the Fleet to Berlin, which had been ordered by the G.O.C. Brandenburg District was forbidden by Lieut.-General Scheüch on the ground that these trains were carrying a large number of peaceable travellers as well as insurgents. . . . The employment of armoured cars to put down the insurrection and hold up the railway trains was expressly allowed by Lieut.-General Scheüch.'

quite a few were retained for the purpose of manning machine-guns.

. . . . . .

My doubts were rising, and I asked the War Minister as to the present strength of the troops. General Scheüch had received a very serious piece of news; that evening it had become finally certain *that on the morrow he would have no further active service troops at his disposal for Berlin beyond the three battalions of Jaeger.* The 2nd Division of Foot Guards had been detrained at Herbesthal with the object of reopening the Rhine bridges and retaking Cologne. The War Minister had reluctantly given his assent to the accomplished fact, at the same time telling the Supreme Command that to leave Berlin without Infantry protection at such a time was quite inexcusable.

In the country the revolutionary movement had made tremendous strides. The War Ministry's news reports for 8th November were as follows:

> 9 a.m.: Serious riots at Magdeburg. 1 p.m.: In Seventh Army Corps Reserve District rioting threatened. 5 p.m.: Halle and Leipzig Red. Evening: Duesseldorf, Haltern, Osnabrueck, Lueneburg Red; Magdeburg, Stuttgart, Oldenburg, Brunswick and Cologne all Red. 7.10 p.m.: G.O.C. Eighteenth Army Corps Reserve at Frankfurt a/M. deposed.

At Berlin the Independent Daeumig was caught red-handed in the midst of his preparations for revolution and was arrested by the military authorities with the assent of the War Minister. General Scheüch still persisted in the belief that the situation in Berlin could be kept in hand.

I feared the troops would hardly strike a blow for the Kaiser, even in Berlin.

From Headquarters came no sign of a change of heart. Thus about eight o'clock I resolved to ask His Majesty to come to the telephone. I called my Adjutant Herr von Prittwitz into the room and instructed him to listen and write down what I had to say.[1]

[1] Throughout the following conversation the 2nd Person Singular, as between relatives, is used [Tr.].

'The advice I have sent Your Majesty by Herr von Hintze I now give you as a relative. Your abdication has become necessary to save Germany from civil war and to fulfil your mission as the Peacemaking Emperor till the end. The blood would be laid upon your head. The great majority of the people believes you to be responsible for the present situation. This belief is false, but it is held. If civil war and worse can be prevented through your abdication, your name will be blessed by future generations. The Inter-Party Committee has spoken, and it has not informed me of the line it took to-day. If nothing is done, the demand will now be made in the Reichstag and will go through. Since the time I took over the business of Government, I have always maintained my independence in the Cabinet. To-day, now that the Social Democrats' Ultimatum has been presented, an Ultimatum which I had been able to stave off till now, my protecting hand can no longer shield the occupant of the Throne. The demand contained in the Ultimatum is now being made by very many others besides the Social Democrats. Disorders have already occurred. It might at first be possible perhaps to put them down by force, but once blood has flowed the cry for vengeance will everywhere be heard. The troops are not to be depended on. At Cologne power is in the hands of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council. At Brunswick the Red Flag flies from the Palace. At Munich the Republic has been proclaimed. At Schwerin a Workers' and Soldiers' Council is sitting. Nowhere have the military been of any value. We are steering straight for civil war. I have struggled against admitting it, but the position is to-day untenable ; the abdication would be received with universal relief and hailed as a liberating and a healing act.

There are two possibilities : 1. Abdication, appointment of a Deputy and Convocation of a National Assembly. 2. Abdication, Renunciation of the Crown Prince and a Regency for your Grandson.

The latter is demanded by the Inter-Party Committee. The former course is in my opinion the better and gives the Monarchy the best possible chance. But whatever step is decided on it must be taken instantly. This sacrifice, if made after blood has once flowed, will have lost all its power for good. Up to now I have confined myself to merely giving information, but since yesterday, in view of the extreme gravity of the situation, I have been obliged to speak frankly. Should the Kaiser take this step, then with the help of the Social Democrats

the situation can be saved. Otherwise Republic and Revolution are at the doors. Were the troops to be depended on, things would be different.

The abdication proposal does not originate either exclusively or primarily with the Social Democrats ; they have only taken it up in order not to lose their hold of the reins.

This is the last possible moment. It is even possible that the abdication might produce a decisive turn in the course of the peace negotiations and take the wind out of the Entente jingoes' sails.

Unless the abdication takes place to-day I can do no more ; nor can the German Princes shield the Kaiser any more.

Such is the terrible situation in which I am bound to speak out and not gloss over things. I have heard that some persons have been denouncing me for alleged intrigues against you. That is a lie, as anyone of my colleagues and associates can prove to you. But for my efforts to shield you the question would already have become acute a week ago.

I speak to you to-day as your relative and as a German Prince. This voluntary sacrifice is necessary to save your good name before the bar of history.'

His Majesty announced his unshakable intention not to give way. At the head of his army he would reduce his country to order ; the necessary instructions had already been given. In a fury of indignation he rejected all my proposals. I begged the Kaiser to dismiss me and appoint a new Chancellor immediately, now that I no longer possessed his confidence. The Kaiser refused with the words : ' You sent out the armistice offer, you will have to put your name to the conditions ! '

I declared myself willing to remain in office till the armistice was signed.

I followed up my conversation with this telegram :

' Berlin,
8th November, 1918.

Arising out of my conversation of to-day I beg to draw Your Majesty's attention to the following events which have recently occurred :

1. His Majesty the King of Bavaria has renounced the throne.
2. His Royal Highness the Duke of Brunswick has done the same

3. His Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin has accepted the demands of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council.

4. The overwhelming majority of the Cabinet, which up to yesterday showed a majority against Your Majesty's renunciation, to-day regards this step as the only possible means of saving Germany from a bloody civil war.

5. Herr von Payer has declared to me that he will be unable, in case of my resignation, to remain any longer in the post of Vice-Chancellor, a post which was created for the chosen representative of the Parliamentary Majority. He will be followed by all the members of the War Cabinet. The formation of a new Government is impossible, since in the view of the Centre Leaders also it would be impossible to find any working majority in the Reichstag. The Empire will thus find itself without a Chancellor, without a Government, without any compact Parliamentary Majority, utterly incapable of negotiating.

Your Majesty's most humble and obedient subject,

MAX, PRINCE OF BADEN.'

I had no hope of success. The Kaiser was possessed by an unshakable belief that the front troops could be depended upon, even were it a case of fighting for his person against their own country. That evening I could only suppose that the Supreme Command shared this optimistic view of his, particularly after a fresh attempt of Payer's to win Groener's support had come to nothing.

To-day I know that only an hour after my telephone conversation the Field-Marshal and General Groener had, after discussion, come to the conclusion that the operations against the home country ordered by the Kaiser that morning were hopeless. This recognition of the truth was not brought about by the complete break-down of the Reserve Formations ; the Supreme Command had received a fresh piece of news which was still concealed from me and which upset all their calculations. ' A front-line division which was supposed to be particularly reliable had been picked out for the task of covering the rear of General Headquarters against the insurgents who had reached Aix-la-Chapelle from Cologne. *This division had refused to obey the orders of the*

officers and against their express order had set off to march home.' [1]

It will always remain a mystery what induced the Supreme Command to let the night pass without giving the alarm. The Kaiser ought to have at once been told—without regard for his sleep—that his refusal to abdicate was based on false premises. The men in Spa were well aware of the desperate situation of the Government. For the last twelve hours, almost without intermission, they had been getting alarm signals from us with the burden: 'We can hold up the Revolution to-day—but not to-morrow.'

[1] Quotation from the Memorandum, 'The Events of November, 1918,' published in the Press of 27th July, 1919. Hindenburg, Plessen, Hintze, Marschall and Schulenburg undertake to guarantee the correctness of its statements. The course of events is here described as follows:

'In view of the evident spread of the revolutionary movement *His Majesty* expressed *his firm determination not to give way*, fully realizing that his abdication would involve the *disintegration of people and army*. On the morning of 8th November after hearing the reports, he announced his intention of reducing the country to order *at the head of his army*. General Groener received orders to prepare the necessary operations.

On the evening of 8th November a conversation on this subject took place between Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, General von Plessen and Lieut.-General Groener. The situation had in the meantime developed as follows:

News had been received that the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils had seized a *de facto* control in the big towns, on the coast, in the West and in the South-West. The line of the Rhine and the huge stores of all kinds which in consequence of the *armistice that was imminent* had been concentrated on and behind this line, as well as the more important railway centres in the interior, were in the hands of the revolutionaries. The stocks of provisions and ammunition at the disposal of the army in the field would only last a few days more, while the transport of supplies from the bases had in many cases, from Cologne and Munich for instance, become impossible. *The troops in occupation at home had almost all gone over to the Revolutionaries.* The troops which had been dispatched there, even though certified by their Commanders as entirely dependable, had at once yielded to the evil influences at home. The formations at the base were corrupted through and through, and even the *army in the field showed traces of disintegration.* Formations in a state of dissolution and hordes of deserters to the number of many thousands were storming the railways at Liège and Namur. A front-line division, which was supposed to be particularly reliable, had been picked out for the task of covering the rear of General Headquarters against the insurgents who had reached Aix-la-Chapelle from Cologne. This division had refused to obey the orders of the officers, and against their express order had set off to march home. The Landsturm Battalions which were covering Aix-la-Chapelle at another point had to be given the order to retire,

We went on with our fruitless efforts.

When late in the evening Wahnschaffe begged Gruenau to inform His Majesty of the contents of my telegram at once, he met with a refusal. Gruenau asserted that at the moment any further disturbance of the Kaiser, who had already gone to bed, would be entirely purposeless. So far-reaching a decision could not, he said, be brought about on the telephone or through intermediaries. Gruenau urged that some responsible personage should be sent. I caught at this proposal and summoned Solf and Waldow. Solf was prepared to go, and to go the same night. Waldow

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simply because the men declared that otherwise they would leave their post on their own account.

In view of these conditions General Groener regarded *the plan of an offensive against the home country as hopeless*. The consideration that by no means all the troops were any longer either disposed or in a condition to fight against revolution at home, was for him decisive. The speedy selection, concentration and employment of reliable troops would, apart from that, have been an extremely difficult task in view of their dispersion over the whole length of front between Switzerland and the Channel—even had they not been, as they nearly all were, in the closest contact with the enemy. It was impossible to count on the operations at home being restricted to a few inconsiderable engagements. On the contrary, *serious struggles were to be expected on the strong line of the Rhine*, on the way through Germany and *in Berlin, i.e.*, over a distance of about 600 km. Apart from this to deal with the insurgents, reinforced as they were by trained and well-armed troops, and with the fortresses in their possession. stronger formations than could possibly be thus hastily collected together, and far more ammunition and provisions than were actually to be had, would be required. Then, over and above *the inevitable civil war*, the bloody struggle would have to go on against the Entente armies from the West which would certainly follow them up.

Field-Marshal von Hindenburg felt himself bound to subscribe, though with great reluctance, to this conclusion of General Groener's, based as it was on a most careful examination of the circumstances. In the given conditions a *success was not to be expected*, on the contrary no responsible adviser could be in doubt that the whole plan of operations must end in *complete collapse*.

General von Plessen on the other hand took the view that it was *impossible for the Kaiser and his army to give in to a handful of revolutionaries*. The country would never be able to understand how it could come about that the same Army that for four years had been the admiration of the whole world was now unable to put down a band of rascally sailors.

The Field-Marshal and General Groener were obliged to maintain their own view, greatly as they respected the General's feelings. He appeared to them to misconceive the situation through *underestimating the strength of the enemy* and through counting on a spirit in the army, such as was unfortunately no longer to be found there to any sufficient extent.'

refused, saying to Wahnschaffe : ' If the Kaiser has his Army at his back, then let him fight for his Crown to the last. If he has not, it would be madness to attempt it. But only the Kaiser and his military advisers can judge of whether this is the case or not.' Before looking for a substitute, Wahnschaffe rang up the Social Democratic party leaders and inquired as to the time-limit to which they had bound themselves in the eyes of their following.

Scheidemann encouraged us to put the journey in hand. But Ebert seemed to be absolutely sure of himself when he said :

> ' The deputation will arrive in Spa after the die has been cast. The Kaiser's decision could only be effective if announced by nine o'clock to-morrow morning—at the very latest.'

The same evening he had spoken still more frankly to a high official whom he met in the Wilhelmstrasse :

> ' The Party Executive has given the word that if the abdication is announced in the early morning papers of to-morrow, the workers are to remain at their work. If not, they are to come out on the streets, and hold big demonstrations in public places as arranged.'

Ebert's statement was telephoned to Spa in the course of the night.

The Ministers' journey did not come off.[1]

[1] The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Herr Solf, telegraphed to the Kaiser :

' Berlin,
8th November, 1918.

I most humbly beg to submit to Your Majesty that the participation of the Majority Socialists in the Government is an indispensable condition of any continuation of the Peace Action. The Socialists leave the Government at once if their Ultimatum is disregarded. Then there only remains the possibility of a Military Dictatorship. In any case, in the eyes of the Entente the Government will have become incapable of conducting negotiations. In these circumstances the Entente will continue hostilities.

Attempts to influence the Socialists to withdraw their resolution have been in vain, and such withdrawal is in fact out of the question. The majority of the Socialists cannot and will not leave the Independents and the Spartacus Group in undisputed control of the masses.

Civil war can be only averted by an immediate decision of Your Majesty's. I therefore most reverently beg Your Majesty by this supreme sacrifice to secure for the Empire the peace which alone can save it from ruin.'

Thus finally an overwhelming feeling of helplessness came over us ; we have now no choice but to let the disorder take its course.

Then, just before I retired for the night, I was urged to take a step which might perhaps still avail to arrest the course of destiny. I recoiled—how often have I asked myself since then whether I was right in refusing.

It was suggested to me that the Imperial Chancellor should that very night make a communication to the Press, in which he would say : ' I have convinced myself of the necessity of the abdication ; I have demanded it and I will carry it through. Till the armistice is settled, the people must have patience.' The people, I was told, was crying out for an act of leadership. Such an announcement would both extort the Kaiser's decision and keep the workers and soldiers in hand. Once postpone the crisis for twenty-four hours, and the game would be won.

It was clear that what was being proposed to me was nothing less than a *coup d'état*. I answered that I would do nothing against the Kaiser.

CHAPTER XIV

THE NINTH OF NOVEMBER

On the morning of 9th November we learn that the waves of Revolution in the country are rising higher, in a flood that is evidently irresistible. The local news however suggests that we still have a firm hold on Berlin. The districts east of Berlin are still calm. The isolation of the capital through the interruption of the railways has been successfully carried through.

> 'The three reliable battalions of Jaeger[1] are posted one in the Palace, one in the Alexander Barracks and one by the bridges in the centre of the city.'

It is believed that these three battalions—and especially the Naumburger Jaeger—are in all circumstances to be depended on. The War Minister is still confident.

> 'We in Berlin are garrisoning a besieged fortress; everything depends on our holding Berlin. If we succeed in that, all is not yet lost, the army must relieve us.'

In the night the Independents, too, have issued a call to a General Strike. Daeumig's arrest gives them their occasion. They pitch their aims high:

> 'We do not demand one person's abdication, we demand the Republic.'

It is however certain that the Independents will not have much success if the Majority Socialists are in a position to give the counter-order: 'Remain at your work.' Ebert and Scheidemann still hope this will be possible and keep asking on the telephone whether we have not had an answer from Spa. On receiving our repeated answer that we have not, their impatience rises from one quarter-hour to the next.

[1] Approx. = 'Rifle Regiments' [Tr.].

Scheidemann says : ' But then I really don't know how we are expected to keep the men from coming out on the streets ! '

At 9.15 a.m. the Secretary of State, Herr von Hintze, rang up from Headquarters to make the following announcements : The Supreme Command had resolved to report to His Majesty at once that in the event of Civil War the Kaiser would not be able to reckon on the support of the armed forces, and that in view of the difficulty of provisioning it the Army would not be in a position to carry on such a civil war.

Wahnschaffe's remark : ' In these circumstances there is no alternative left to the abdication,' went uncontradicted.

Wahnschaffe at once rang up Ebert and appealed to him to step in now and hold up the demonstrations. He hinted to him that the abdication was to be expected.

Ebert answered : ' Too late ! The ball has been set rolling. One factory (Schwartzkopff) has already come out on the streets.'

Wahnschaffe replied : ' They can be brought to reason again.'

Ebert : ' We will see what can be done.'

I shall never forget the agony of this senseless, inexplicable wait that followed. The party that was plotting revolution was bound to win when once the masses got on the move. With every minute the possibility of bringing about a counter-move on the part of the soberer elements grew fainter.

About ten o'clock the message reached us that many thousands of unarmed workers were marching in procession upon the centre of the city. They carried placards with the inscription ' Brothers, no shooting ! ' The column was headed by women and children.

Geheimrat von Schlieben came with a similar report from the Ministry of the Interior. It said that masses of workmen were already on their way from the northern districts to the centre of the city, and everything would depend on whether the police, in conjunction with the troops that remained at our disposal in Berlin, succeeded in resisting their onset.

The Chief of Police was rung up and confirmed our view that the situation was extremely grave. He gave us a fresh piece of news that the insurgents had attacked the barracks of the 'Cockchafers' [one of the regiments of Foot Guards; Tr.] and that blood had already flowed.[1]

Directly afterwards came the fearful news which undermined the whole fabric of our confidence: The Naumburger Jaeger had gone over to the insurgents!

I passed on this news to Spa, as well as the reports which followed it thick and fast of troops mutinying or refusing duty. I demanded the decision, telling them that it was not a matter of hours but of minutes. Our telephone messages were taken down at Spa by Herren von Hintze, Gruenau, Count Schulenburg, General Groener and others.

In the telephone conversations which took place up to eleven o'clock we were consoled again and again by words such as: 'The decision is imminent,' 'Events are taking their course,' 'You must wait a little'—and the like.

The impression of everyone at the Chancellery was that at Headquarters events were shaping themselves as they were naturally bound to do after the report of the Supreme Commanders—*i.e.*, that the Kaiser was going to abdicate. After eleven o'clock the news became more definite; the two messages that were for me decisive ran as follows:

> '*The matter had now been decided in principle; they were now simply engaged on the formulation.—The Kaiser had resolved on abdication. We should receive the formulation in half-an-hour's time.*'[2]

I expressed my agreement with Simons. 'You were

[1] These messages were passed on to Spa with the others. Perhaps this explains the erroneous impression at General Headquarters that the Chancellery had reported the streets of Berlin were running in blood. Herr Wahnschaffe, who maintained the telephone communication with Headquarters at the time, has stated positively that he did not employ any such expression. Geheimrat von Schlieben, who was a witness to the conversation, corroborates his assertion that nothing was transmitted beyond the simple report of the Chief of Police without any kind of exaggeration.

[2] *Vide* Account of the events at Headquarters in the Excursus at the end of this Chapter (p. 364 ff.).

right yesterday ; in the present situation Ebert is the only possible Chancellor.'

I said to myself that the Revolution was on the point of winning, that it could not be beaten down, but might perhaps be stifled out.[1] Now is the time to come out with the Abdication, with Ebert's Chancellorship, with the appeal to the people to determine its own Constitution in a Constituent National Assembly. If Ebert is presented to me as Tribune of the People by the mob, we shall have the Republic, if Liebknecht is, we shall have Bolshevism as well. But should Ebert be appointed Imperial Chancellor by the Kaiser at the moment of abdication, then there would still be a slender hope for the Monarchy left. Perhaps we should then succeed in diverting the revolutionary energy into the lawful channels of an election campaign.

The situation developed at a break-neck speed in favour of the revolutionaries.

The military authorities had messages confirming the rumoured mutiny of the troops. At eleven o'clock Lieut. von Etzdorf appeared at the Ministry of War and reported that the Fourth Jaeger Battalion and other formations in the Kupfergraben Barracks, the Jaeger Battalion in the Palace and the armoured cars at the Palace were refusing to move against the people. The example of the picked troops would carry the whole garrison with it. This opinion was no sooner uttered than confirmed ; one after another messages arrive reporting refusal of duty on the part of other formations (the Northern Reserve, the Jueterbog Artillery). Several formations were negotiating with the Majority Socialists and intended to put themselves at the disposal of the people.

Lieut. Colin Ross[2] turns up at the Chancellery between eleven and half-past, reports that huge columns of workers are once more under way, and gives us a lively

[1] Emil Barth in his work, *Aus der Werkstatt der Revolution* does in fact complain that ' Revolution was throttled by Evolution,' and thus his dream of the Communist upheaval shattered. ' The cry for the National Assembly prevented the dictatorial measures necessary to Revolution being taken ' (p. 130).

[2] At the time attached to the Press Department of the Foreign Office.

description of the way in which soldiers and demonstrators are fraternizing. He says the movement is irresistible, and that David has sent me word that the Social Democratic Party was doing its best to quiet things down. To use armed force would be senseless and would only make matters worse.

I too am convinced that any such attempt, if made with disaffected troops, could only lead to the victory of the Radicals. I request the Minister of War to come over to me at once to clear up the question of the instructions to be given to the troops for the use of their arms in this crisis.[1]

I hear by telephone from the Reichstag that the Social Democrat Ministers have sent in their resignation.

The half-hour went by without the promised draft coming from Spa. At any moment now the Kaiser's deposition would be proclaimed on the streets. We could do nothing to prevent it. Deposition could only be avoided by an announcement of Abdication. Its publication must take place now, and must not come on the top of Deposition.

We tried again and again to get into touch with the Kaiser. One of the telephone receivers at the Villa Fraineuse had been disconnected, the other was engaged. I saw myself faced with the alternative either of waiting helplessly without doing anything, or of taking action on my own responsibility. I was well aware that I was not formally entitled to make the publication without having the express consent of the Kaiser. But I considered it my duty to make known the Kaiser's decision—now that, according to my information, it had been finally taken—while some good might still come of such publication. I did not tell anyone but Simons of my intention. He urgently advised me to

[1] According to Colin Ross's recollection I had used the words : ' You take that in hand.' He professes to have understood them as an authorization to put through the order prohibiting shooting that he had proposed to me. Since none of the company—not one of whom had misunderstood my words as he had done—showed signs of taking any step in this direction, he, Lieutenant Colin Ross, had gone to one of the Chancellery telephones, had there rung up the Ministry of War, and told them that the soldiers were not to shoot. In fact, a telephone message in this sense reached the Ministry of War in the latter part of the forenoon, but in consequence of its dubious origin was not passed on any further. All I did on receiving Colin Ross's report was to summon the War Minister.

disregard formal considerations at a moment when it was perhaps still possible to save the Monarchy.[1]

I was well aware of the seriousness of the responsibility I was taking on myself in sending to the Wolff Telegraph Agency the following manifesto :

> ' The Kaiser and King has resolved to *renounce the throne*. The Chancellor remains in office until the questions connected with the abdication of the Kaiser, the renunciation of the Crown Prince [2] of the German Empire and of Prussia, and the setting-up of the Regency have been regulated. He intends to propose to the Regent the appointment of Herr Ebert to the Chancellorship and the bringing in of a Bill to enact that election writs be immediately issued for *a German Constituent National Assembly*. This would have to settle finally the future constitution of the German people, including any sections of it that might wish to be included within the Empire.'

About twelve o'clock this communiqué became known in the streets of Berlin. Almost simultaneously a deputation from the Social Democratic Party was announced. It was led by Ebert, and consisted of Scheidemann and other members of the party, among them Heinrich Schulz and Brolat. I received them in the presence of the Vice-Chancellor, the Secretaries of State Solf, Count Roedern and Haussmann, and the Ambassador Count Bernstorff. Simons soon joined them ; he had been at the Ministry of the Interior to clear up the points of constitutional law involved in the question of *Regent or Deputy*.

[1] As President of the Federal Supreme Court, Herr Simons subsequently gave the following account of the motives which had actuated him : ' For me it was a question of deciding whether the Government should pass peacefully into the hands of Ebert or whether the Spartacists should get control after a bloody revolution. The latter would have spelt the destruction not only of the Monarchy but also of the Army, whose continued existence depended on its receiving supplies from home. Only if the civil servants of the old regime put themselves at Ebert's disposal, was the army to be saved ; and I knew Ebert had no objection of principle to the Monarchy. If the Spartacists had taken over, it would have meant not only a revolution *à la* Moscow, but also a complete breakdown of the administrative machine. I had all this before my mind—though more pictured than clearly thought out—at the moment when I advised the Prince to do anything that could be done to bring off the publication in time.'

[2] *Vide supra*, p. 257 n.

Herr Ebert began: 'We have been instructed by our party, for the preservation of peace and order to declare to the Imperial Chancellor that we regard it as indispensable for the avoidance of bloodshed that the Government be now entrusted to men who possess the full confidence of the people. We therefore consider it necessary that the Chancellorship and the Brandenburg Command should be held by representatives of our party.

In this matter we have the entire support of the Independent Social Democrats as well as of our own party. The troops also have been won over to our side. The Independents are not yet clear whether they will join the new Government or not; if they should decide to do so, we shall welcome and demand their inclusion. We have nothing against the inclusion of representatives of the bourgeois parties; only the Government must be one in which we have a decisive majority. On this point we are ready to negotiate.'

I curtly reminded Herr Scheidemann of his position as Secretary of State. He declared that he no longer felt himself a member of the Government.

I thereupon asked Herr Ebert whether the party leaders had the will and the power to prevent the movement degenerating into paths of violence and whether they could guarantee the preservation of order if the soldiers were forbidden to shoot.

Herr Scheidemann replied: 'All the garrisons and regiments of Greater Berlin have gone over to us. We have just come from the Reichstag, where deputations from all the regiments had come to assure us of their support; there was also one from the Luebbener Jaeger[1] who had been called in as being particularly reliable.'

Herr Haussmann put the question: 'What proof can you give of the assertion that the troops have adhered to your movement? Are you even sure that you can still control the movement and that it is not passing out of your hands?'

Scheidemann replied: 'I am quite confident that we shall be able to control it. We cannot of course give written

[1] An error of Scheidemann's—the Luebbener Jaeger were not in Berlin; he could only have meant the Naumburger Jaeger.

evidence as to the attitude taken by the troops. I propose that Herr Haussmann should take a motor and drive past each of the barracks in the company of a member of the party ; the cheers of the troops would let him know which side they were on.'

Haussmann retorted : ' I must refuse to appear in public under circumstances which would make it seem as if I supported the movement.'

I declared to Herr Ebert : ' I have already proposed to the Kaiser that a Bill shall be presented in the Reichstag for the issue of writs of election to a German Constituent National Assembly ; and that this Assembly should then decide how Germany is to be governed in the future.'

Ebert : ' We can agree in principle to such a National Assembly.'

Haussmann : ' Should this Assembly be called at once, in the midst of the revolutionary movement, it would let loose a turbulent election campaign and give no true picture of the public mind.'

Ebert : ' We shall have to consider that point further.' [1]

I retired together with Count Bernstorff and the Secretaries of State who were present to decide on the final answer to be given to Ebert.

Not a word was spoken in opposition when I told them of my decision to hand over the Chancellorship to Ebert.

At this point the War Minister, General Scheüch, arrived. He had been held up in the ante-room by telephone inquiries from Headquarters. We at once discussed the military position in Berlin. At this stage Scheidemann must have been called in, since Scheüch has a precise recollection of his having been present. The reports from the different regiments were gone through again. Then Lieut.-Col. van den Bergh entered and handed his Chief a piece of paper.

General Scheüch read me what it contained ; it was a telephone message from the G.O.C. Brandenburg District to the War Minister, received at 12.30 p.m. :

[1] Quoted from notes written down by Conrad Haussmann on the same day from memory, and from other sources.

'On ground of message from Guards [1] that the great majority of available troops will no longer shoot and have formed Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, General von Linsingen asks whether under the circumstances fire-arms are to be employed or not. Immediate decision requested, as by 2 p.m. gathering of large masses (30,000 men) to be expected.'

Scheidemann asserted that the new Government did not require to be protected. The party had sent representatives to each of the places where large crowds had collected to inform them of the Kaiser's abdication and the formation of the new Government. General Scheüch still insisted that some instruction must be given the troops on the employment of their arms, and that they would have to shoot for the protection of life, property and Government buildings.

None of those present made any objection to the answer which he gave to be passed on to the District Command: 'There can only be a question of protecting the life and property of the citizens and Government buildings where *directly threatened*. No use is to be made of fire-arms for any other objects than these.'

On van den Bergh's transmitting this order, he received the answer: 'General Linsingen wishes me to say that the soldiers will probably now refuse to shoot even for the protection of Government buildings.' [2]

Here he was not told how the G.O.C. Brandenburg

[1] The G.O.C. Guards Reserves is intended.

[2] Neither the Ministers who had gathered in my room nor I myself took any part in the proceedings, except in so far as we did not raise any objection. Scheidemann obviously imagined that he had influenced the decision. This was not the case. His words, 'We can protect ourselves,' accompanied the War Minister's decision, without influencing it in any way. This erroneous idea cannot possibly be maintained in view of the facts that (1) the War Minister's order was an answer to Linsingen's message that the great majority of the troops on the spot would not shoot—were fire-arms to be employed under such circumstances?; (2) the War Minister, General Scheüch, had already determined on this answer in the very moment in which the question was put to him. In my view most of the legends as to an alleged order not to shoot issued by Prince Max's Government are based ultimately on this erroneous impression of Scheidemann's.

District had already, without waiting for the decision of the War Minister, issued the following General Order against shooting :

> ' Troops are not to employ their arms, even for the protection of Government buildings.' [1]

Ebert and the rest of the deputation were now called in. I asked him whether he was prepared to accept the office of Imperial Chancellor.

Ebert answered : ' It is a hard task but I am ready to take it on.'

The Foreign Minister then put the question : ' Are you prepared to carry on the Government in accordance with the Constitution ? ' Ebert said he was. ' Even with the Monarchical Constitution ? ' Solf asked him.

Ebert's answer was : ' Yesterday I could have given an unconditional affirmative to this question ; to-day I must first consult my friends.'

I thereupon declared : ' We must now solve the question of the Regency.'

' It is too late for that,' was Ebert's reply. And behind him his party delegates repeated in chorus : ' Too late, too late ! '

I was still without word from the Kaiser and thus had no authorization to take the steps which the moment demanded. A serious handicap this for me in coming to a decision.

I keep living through these hours again and keep saying to myself how completely different the situation would have been as regards my freedom of action, had I then been able to answer the ' Too late ! ' of the Social Democrats with

[1] Apart from that there already existed, as we later learned, two instructions issued by the G.O.C. Guards Reserves independently of Linsingen which were anyhow likely to restrict the troops in the employment of their fire-arms : an order of 5th November to the effect that for the present only defensive measures were to be taken, that arms were to be employed in case of *hostile attack* ; and a second order of the morning of 9th November forbidding the use of fire-arms except to ward off attack. The Berlin troops were under the immediate command of the G.O.C. Guards Reserves.

'The Kaiser has appointed his Deputy.'[1] That was the only solution capable of quickly bringing about a *fait accompli*.

The composition of the new Government was discussed. I suggested to the Secretaries of State that they should reconsider their decision to resign, impressed as I was by the necessity of avoiding at all costs a collapse of the machinery of government. It was a question of saving the last remains of legality and continuity that could be saved. The Minister of War gave them a splendid example. On Scheidemann's saying that the posts of War Minister and G.O.C. Brandenburg District must be filled by members of his party, General Scheüch declared that he should remain at his post. The army was engaged with the enemy and must be kept supplied; the armistice negotiations were in progress. He should therefore hold out in spite of his personal convictions, unless he were to be swept away. When once his task was fulfilled, he would again claim full freedom of decision.

Scheidemann gave up his objection; however, he thought a Social Democrat should be attached to the War Minister as a guarantee in the eyes of the outer world. General Scheüch expressed his agreement. Scheidemann nominated the Reichstag Deputy, Herr Goehre.

Lieut.-Col. van den Bergh remained on as liaison officer in the Adjutant's Room at the Chancellery. When his Chief had already gone he was once more rung up by the G.O.C. Brandenburg District and asked whether in the circumstances the War Minister's order was still to hold good. Bergh said that the War Minister could no longer be got at,

[1] In going to print the following draft Proclamation for the Institution of an Imperial Deputy, prepared by the Under-Secretary of the Imperial Ministry of the Interior, Herr Lewald, on 31st October, 1918, has once more been brought to my notice: 'Whereas I have been convinced that My Person has become an obstacle in the way of the German people's obtaining a peace such as would ensure, after its unexampled display of heroic sacrifice and suffering, its continued national existence and its future, I have determined to renounce the Government. And because a like obstacle would result from the succession of My eldest son, His Imperial and Royal Highness the Crown Prince of the German Empire and of Prussia, I have appointed My second son, His Royal Highness Prince Eitel Friedrich of Prussia as My Deputy for the carrying on of the Affairs of State.'

but that in his own view protection must be afforded to life, property and Government buildings; they must manage this with bullet or bayonet as best they could.

I put the Library at Herr Ebert's disposal for his negotiations. He had invited the leaders of the Independents to come and see him. Haase was not yet back from Kiel, but the Deputies Cohn (Member for Nordhausen), Dittmann and Vogtherr had turned up. At Ebert's wish Herr von Payer attended this discussion, without however taking part in it.

According to statements of Payer's,[1] the tone was far from friendly; both sides were distinctly irritable. Ebert began by saying rather curtly and in a 'patronizing' tone, that the Social Democratic Party had decided to take over the Government. He as Chancellor invited the Independents to say whether they would enter the Government and what attitude they would take towards a possible co-operation in it with other parties. The Independents were decidedly 'subdued' and declared that they could not bind themselves in any way without reference to their friends; they did not, however, refuse on principle.

A long discussion then arose as to the conditions of their taking office, and as to a possible inclusion of representatives of the Progressive Party on the one hand and of Liebknecht on the other, without either side pledging itself in any respect. Ebert then sent the deputies away with a very short time-limit in which to make up their minds, and drove back to the Reichstag, where the Executive of the Social Democratic Party had already met.

About midday the Wilhelmstrasse filled up with processions of workmen, who showed no signs of any aggressive intentions against the Government buildings. Wahnschaffe was all this time making vain efforts to get the text of the Kaiser's decision.

Meantime at 2 p.m. news came that Scheidemann had proclaimed the Republic from the steps of the Reichstag.[2]

[1] Cf. Payer, *op. cit.* p. 164 f.

[2] In the Party Committee Room a high official is said to have been negotiating with the Social Democrats on the question of the Regency, while Scheidemann was addressing the crowd outside.

On the lips of an Independent such a cry would have been no proclamation of irrevocable change; the Independents had been cheering the Social Republic for months. But the Secretary of State's word bound his party. It was thus Scheidemann who led the last charge against the Monarchy.[1]

Finally, after 2 o'clock, the Kaiser's decision was communicated from Headquarters. I give the document as the Secretary of State, Herr von Hintze, read it into the telephone:

'General Headquarters,
9th November, 1918.

1. His Majesty assents to the German Government's empowering the Armistice Commission, now with the enemy, to conclude an Agreement immediately, even before the Armistice Conditions have become known here.

2. To avoid bloodshed His Majesty is ready to abdicate as German Kaiser, but not as King of Prussia. His Majesty also desires to remain King of Prussia in order to prevent the army becoming leaderless and breaking up, in consequence of the resignation of the majority of officers which would be simultaneous with such abdication.

3. His Majesty does not desire a civil war.

4. His Majesty, on abdication as German Kaiser, will command Field-Marshal von Hindenburg to take over the Supreme Command of the German army, and will in August Person remain with the Prussian troops. Further decisions would be reserved for the Imperial Administrator.

5. The Army Commanders and the Supreme Command are of the opinion that the abdication of the German Kaiser and Supreme War Lord at this moment will provoke the gravest convulsions in the Army, and they can therefore no longer assume responsibility for the Army holding together.

(Signed) WILHELM, I.R.'

Wahnschaffe, and then Simons, protested against the constitutional absurdity of this document. It meant shattering the Imperial Constitution, the corner-stone of which was

[1] I later learned that Scheidemann originally intended his cry of 'Long live the Republic!' as a mere confession of faith in the principles of his party, and that he was without any intention of influencing the actual course of events at the moment.

Article 11 with its plain meaning that the Imperial Sovereignty within the Empire must necessarily and always be wielded by the person who exercises Sovereignty over the Prussian State.[1]

Simons informed Hintze of my public announcement and defended it to him. We had only acted on the messages from Headquarters in the firm conviction that the Kaiser had made an irrevocable decision to abdicate.

Hintze contended that his communications admitted of no inference being drawn as to the nature of His Majesty's decision. Simons disputed this; never for a moment he said could we have dreamt of anything so constitutionally and politically impossible as a partial abdication. Thus it became clear to me that at the other end my last moment attempt to save the Monarchy was looked upon as a *coup d'état*.

Ebert returned to the Chancellery to continue his negotiations on the formation of the Government. He was still striving not to break the organic connection with the past. He thought of appointing Landsberg and Scheidemann to Secretaryships of State, but he intended to ask the existing Secretaries of State to carry on provisionally. Haussmann was requested to retain his office under the new Government; he answered that his party must decide that. Ebert asked him in any case to co-operate in the first Proclamation. With Haussmann's and (probably) Simons' assistance two Proclamations were drafted.

In the first Ebert announced his assumption of the Chancellorship as follows:

[1] A number of German Constitutional Lawyers before the Revolution and since have discussed the question whether a separation of the Crowns of Prussia and of the Empire is legally possible, and have concluded not merely that Article 11 assigns the prerogative to the State of Prussia of holding the Presidency in the Bundesrat, but also that since the duty of the Wearer of the Prussian Crown for the time being is so clearly implied in the Imperial Constitution as a whole, 'the cession of the Imperial Power to another Prince of the Empire or to any other persons would have meant the shattering of the delicate fabric of the Constitution and a revolutionary breach with existing law.' (Professor Richard Thoma, 'Der Thronverzicht des Kaiser,' *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 21st August, 1919.)

'To the Citizens of Germany!

The retiring Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, with the assent of all the Secretaries of State, has handed over to me the conduct of affairs as Chancellor. . . .'

The second appealed to the forces of order to protect the State from collapse:

'To all Authorities and Officials![1]

The new Government has taken over the conduct of affairs to save the German people from civil war and famine and to see that their right to self-determination is respected. It can only fulfil this task if all authorities and officials in town and country *lend a helping hand.*

I know that *for many* it will be *difficult to work with the new men* who have taken over the Government of the Empire, *but I appeal to their love of our people.* A break-down of organization in this grave hour would hand Germany over to the extreme of anarchy and misery.

Join me therefore in helping the Fatherland by *working on fearlessly and tirelessly each man at his post*, until the time comes for him to be relieved.

EBERT,
Chancellor of the Empire.

Berlin, *9th November*, 1918.'

Between five and six o'clock I went to say good-bye to Ebert.

His words to me were: 'I should very much like you to stay.'

I asked what I could do.

Ebert: 'I should like you to remain on as Administrator of the Empire.'

The same request had repeatedly been made to me by my former colleagues in the course of the last few hours. My answer to Herr Ebert was:

'I know that you are on the point of concluding an agree-

[1] It is quite unthinkable that the old officers and officials would have offered their services to the new Government had the Prince not given it some shred of legitimacy. It was this alone that induced him, Simons, himself to do so. (After-war statement by Simons.)

ment with the Independents, and I cannot work with the Independents.'

At the door I turned back: 'Herr Ebert, I commit the German Empire to your keeping!'

He answered: 'I have lost two sons for this Empire.'

. . . . . .

I have often discussed the question in later days, asking myself again and again whether, by accepting the Administracy on the Ninth of November, I could have saved the Monarchy. The result has always been to confirm what I felt at the time: I could have taken this road had I been appointed by the Kaiser as his Deputy; an attempt at a *coup d'état* must suffer shipwreck on my own conscience.

EXCURSUS ON THE NINTH OF NOVEMBER

What was Happening at Headquarters in the Meantime

On 9th November the course of events at Spa remained for us shrouded in an inexplicable atmosphere of mystery. To-day we have at our command the statements of eye-witnesses—in particular of Herr von Gruenau and Count Schulenburg. We now know why we were bound to draw false conclusions as to what was going on there. We now know that in the early hours of the morning the Kaiser, after a long struggle, had actually brought himself to take the decision which was in fact inevitable.

Herr von Gruenau reports :

'The Kaiser, who had been visibly impressed by Groener's statement, was still hesitating ; it was, however, clear from his utterances, which betrayed a mood of melancholy resignation, that he had inwardly reconciled himself to the idea of abdication and that he would finally bring himself to the point of taking the painful decision. The rest of the company had the same impression as I. While Herr von Hintze was at the telephone I remained for some time alone with His Majesty, and was now able to carry out the instructions which I had received on the previous evening and which had as their object the saving of the Dynasty—in fact, of the Monarchy itself—through a timely and voluntary renunciation on the part of the Kaiser. I represented to the Kaiser once again that in the view of the highest military experts no other possible course remained to him but that of declaring his abdication. It would be quite impossible for the Kaiser to let things come to civil war at a moment when after more than four years of war the conclusion of the armistice was imminent, and everyone longing for peace and for home. At the end of so long a war, and after all the privations which the country had suffered, no one could take the responsibility of leading the army, which had so long kept the enemy at bay beyond the frontiers, to wage in its own

country a civil war, with all the horrors and the embitterment which that necessarily involved. The whole burden of the responsibility would be laid on his head, and he would be charged with having overwhelmed his people in the miseries of civil war for his own personal gratification. If, however, he were to make the great sacrifice and retire now, his people at peace in their homes would value it as such in days to come, they would be grateful to him for all that he accomplished and attempted, and would honour him for his noble decision and his tragic fate. The sacrifice would thus, from the point of view of the Monarchical principle and of the Dynasty, not have been made in vain.

The Kaiser emphatically rejected the idea of his being the cause of civil bloodshed, but expressed once again his conviction that his abdication at the present moment would bring the Republic, and that would mean the disintegration of the country and its reduction to a state of utter powerlessness. He spoke with bitterness of the way in which the democratic Government, in spite of his ready acquiescence in all the reforms and changes of personnel proposed, had neglected to take any effective steps to counter the attacks which had been directed against his person and which aimed ultimately at destroying the institution of the Monarchy itself; it had allowed itself to be taken in tow by the Social Democrats, who were only concerned to establish their own supremacy. Finally the Kaiser expressed his willingness to abdicate, if that was what the German people really wanted; he had reigned long enough to know what a thankless business it was; far from clinging to his Imperial position, he had only done his duty in remaining at his post and not deserting army and people at such a time as the present. Now the others might show whether they would manage things any better.'

At this point General von Plessen suggested as a compromise that he might abdicate as Kaiser while continuing to reign on as King of Prussia. General Count Schelenburg, who had arrived in the meanwhile, pleaded insistently for the same solution. He was convinced that at bottom the army remained loyal to the Supreme War Lord. He considered that the decision to reduce His country to order at the head of His troops, which the Kaiser had upheld up till yesterday evening, had been wrongly abandoned in a moment of weakness.

Herr von Gruenau writes :

'Count Schulenburg disputed the correctness of General Groener's estimate of the situation, and expressed his conviction, based on his precise knowledge of the state of morale at the front, with which he was in continuous and close contact, that the Army stood firm in defence of its Kaiser ; that anyhow the Prussian troops remained loyal to their King, that they would never desert him, and would not understand his abdication ; and that at the least the Kaiser ought to reign on as King of Prussia and rally his Prussians round him—then it would remain to be seen what the rest of the Empire would do ! To Herr von Hintze's interruption as to whether he supposed that the troops would fight for their King against their country, Count Schulenburg was forced to reply with the admission that they would not, but he still persisted in his view that it was necessary for the Kaiser to maintain his hold on the Crown of Prussia. He suggested that in case of a complete abdication on the part of the Kaiser a number of regular officers, and in particular the majority of the senior officers, would resign their commissions and thus leave the Army without leaders ; and in that case it would be impossible for anyone to guarantee the Army holding together.

Whereas the Kaiser had up to then been quite prepared to take account of the situation and retire from the scene, the suggestions of Count Schulenburg now seemed to offer him the probably not unwelcome opportunity of striking a compromise. The political consequences, which logically followed from General Groener's clear and precise account of the situation, were not drawn.'

The Kaiser himself had a feeling that the Chancellor ought to be informed of this sudden and unexpected turn of events ; he gave his Secretary of State, Herr von Hintze, the order to inform the Chancellor by telephone that he was ready to abdicate as German Kaiser, to avoid bloodshed, but that *he intended to remain King of Prussia and not leave his army*.

Then, according to his own statements, Count Schulenburg broke in and prevented the Chancellor being informed.

'I demanded,' he says, 'that so important a decision of His Majesty's should first be set down in writing, and that it should not be telephoned to the Chancellor until approved and signed by His Majesty.'

They did not, however, stop at this omission. A communication was in fact made to the Chancellery, which had an unintentionally misleading effect.

Count Schulenburg's own statement on this point is as follows :

> ' His Majesty then instructed Herr von Hintze, Generals von Plessen and Marschall, and myself to draft the declaration in question. While we were engaged in this task, the Secretary of the Chancellery, Herr Wahnschaffe, rang up. I spoke to him personally. On his demanding that they in Berlin should be given the Declaration of Abdication within the next few minutes, I replied that so important a decision as the abdication of the Kaiser could not be taken within a few minutes. His Majesty had, however, taken his decision, it was at that moment being formulated, and the Government must have patience for half-an-hour, when the Declaration would be in its hands.'

To-day I regard it as certain that this communication is identical with the message which the Chancellery took down as follows :

> ' The Kaiser has resolved on abdication ; you will receive the Declaration which is being formulated in half-an-hour's time.'

Even were the telephone message worded as Count Schulenburg states, the Government could only take it to mean that the Kaiser had taken the decision to abdicate without reservation, and that it was merely a question of finding the appropriate form of words.

I could not be expected to take the possibility of a change of mind into account, knowing as I did of the two decisive facts upon which the Kaiser's decision must presumably be based, viz :

The account given by the Supreme Command of *conditions in the army.*

The reports on the *relative position of the opposing forces in Berlin.*

To sum up, in all the telephone conversations of 9th November there was not a word or syllable of any *abdication*

only as Kaiser and not as King of Prussia—until 2 p.m. We now know that the Kaiser's original intention of informing the Chancellor at once as to the new turn of events had been given up. And no one in political life could possibly have hit on this *compromise* on his own account, which was as indefensible constitutionally as it was politically senseless. Such an abdication as Kaiser but not as King of Prussia was quite incompatible with the Constitution. We could not possibly expect that the formulation we were to receive would be such as to involve the complete wrecking of the Imperial Constitution.

APPENDIX V

(p. 75)

THE FIGHT TO GET JUSTICE DONE[1]

I

The Agreement of the Fourteen Points has been broken. I will once more prove this assertion in detail.

Point One.

'Open covenants of Peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall proceed always *frankly and in the public view*.'

The Treaty is the result of six months working in secret. Its responsible authors shun publicity. 'The awakened peoples of the world' and 'the plain man with his sense of justice,' whose praises were sung by Wilson in former days, have at no stage of the negotiations had any opportunity of making themselves heard. Even to-day the treaty is kept from the enemy peoples—the synopsis which has been issued in its general effect amounts to a fraud.

Point Two.

'Absolute *freedom of navigation* upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.'

The principle of the Freedom of the Seas aims at the security of non-combatants in time of war. It is deeply rooted in the history of the American people. For this

[1] An article I wrote against the signing of the Versailles Treaty, which appeared in the *Berliner Tageblatt of* 11th-13th June, 1919.

principle America professed to have gone to war. Wilson undertook to maintain it at all costs and against anyone who might infringe it. (24th July, 1915.) On 5th November, 1918, he renounced this Freedom of the Seas again, but the completeness of his conversion probably came as a surprise even to those of his allies who had extorted this renunciation. America, once the champion of the non-combatants, even in a life and death struggle, has, after the fighting was over, sanctioned the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of women and children ; and now, following the line marked out by the armistice policy, the Peace Treaty demands the handing-over of 140,000 milch cows, thus decreeing a fresh massacre of the children. (Annex 4, § 6.)

Point Three.

'*The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers* and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance.'

Every imaginable economic barrier has been set up against German industry, the German trader is refused any sort of equality of opportunity. Wilson demands that considerations of equity and fair play shall obtain in the competition of the nations with each other. There is no word of this any more. But further, even the written ordinances of International Law have been torn up, for the sake of crippling Germany's trade and industry, and blotting out her name in the economic life of the world. Measures taken against German private property, including intellectual property, illegal even in time of war, are now proclaimed as the law which is to obtain in time of peace.

Point Four.

'Adequate guarantees given and taken that *national armaments will be reduced* to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.'

No security whatever has been exchanged to insure reciprocity of disarmament. Germany alone is to be

disarmed, and the maintenance of large armaments on the part of the Entente is expressly provided for in the clause stipulating that German territory shall remain occupied for fifteen years. It is true that the French military budget is to be relieved,—through Germany bearing the costs of the Armies of Occupation.

Point Five.

'A free, open-minded, and *absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims*, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the Government whose title is to be determined.'

A solution of the colonial questions is proposed which is the most narrow-minded and partisan solution conceivable. Germany's moral claim to be a colonial power was before the war regarded as indisputable, particularly in the eyes of the English experts. The loyalty shown by the natives of German East Africa in this war is without a parallel in colonial history and a clear indication of the will of the native population. The proposed treatment of the question entirely ignores both 'Germany's title' and 'the interests of the populations concerned.'

Point Seven.

'*Belgium*, the whole world will agree, *must be evacuated and restored*, without any attempt to limit the sovereignty which she enjoys in common with all other free nations. No single act will serve as this will serve to restore confidence among the nations in the laws which they themselves have set and determined for the government of their relations with one another. Without this healing act, the whole structure and validity of international law is for ever impaired.'

Belgium is not only to be restored, but extended at the cost of German territory and a German population.

In Point Seven Wilson not only demands the restoration of Belgium's unrestricted sovereignty, but asserts the right

of all other free nations to such sovereignty. According to the conditions of the Peace Treaty Germany is to lose its freedom. Some of the most important of the sovereign rights of the German people are to be transferred to the Reparations Commission ; and the plans to interfere in the national administration of Justice, such for instance as the grotesque and humiliating demand for the extradition of the Kaiser, go far beyond all the claims which Austria once made against Serbia and which Serbia then rejected as incompatible with her own sovereignty.

Point Eight.

'*All French territory should be freed, and the invaded portions restored* ; and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of *Alsace-Lorraine*, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted, in order that Peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all.'

President Wilson has in his speeches declared again and again that one wrong could never be righted by another.

The Peace Treaty, not content with the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine, is to prepare the way for the annexation, open or veiled, of territory in the West which is indisputably German. Germany's western frontier, as marked out by the enemy is not drawn in agreement with Point Eight of the Wilson programme, but in strict accordance with the clauses of the *Secret Agreements of 14th February, 1917, between the Tsar and the French Republic*. These read as follows :

1. Alsace-Lorraine to be given back to France.
2. The frontiers of (this territory) to be extended to include at the least the whole of the former Duchy of Lorraine and to be determined in accordance with the wishes of the French Government, with special regard to strategic necessities, and so that the whole of the iron ore producing district of Lorraine and the whole of the coal-producing district of the Saar Basin may be incorporated in French Territory.
3. The remaining territories on the left bank of the Rhine, which at present form part of the German Empire, to be

entirely separated from Germany and freed from any kind of political or economic dependence on Germany.

4. The territories on the left bank of the Rhine, which are not incorporated in French territory, to form an autonomous and neutral state and be occupied by French troops *until the enemy Empires have finally fulfilled all the conditions and given all the guarantees which shall be specified in the Treaties of Peace.*

Point Nine.

'*A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy* should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of *nationality*.'

Italy's northern frontier is to be drawn in a way that stands in the most glaring contradiction with the principle of Nationality. The proposed settlement hands over to Italy a population passionately German in sentiment and with a great German past as a mere appurtenance to a strategic frontier, just as the German population of the Saar Valley is to be treated as livestock belonging to the mines and to be pledged with them.

Point Ten.

'*The peoples of Austria-Hungary*, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the *freest opportunity of autonomous development*.'

Now that Austria-Hungary has broken up, Point Ten could only mean that the peoples that made up the former Austria-Hungary were to have a free say in adopting the national allegiance and the form of constitution of their choice. Article 80 of the Peace Treaty expressly provides that German-Austria is *not* to have any right to free self-determination, in case it should wish to follow the natural impulses of nationality and reunite itself with Germany.

Point Thirteen.

'*An independent Polish State* should be erected, which should include the territories inhabited by *indisputably Polish populations*, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea, and whose political and economic inde-

pendence and territorial integrity should be guaranteed by international covenant.'

The Polish State as planned includes huge stretches of territory inhabited by an indisputably German population. Every disputed territory is assigned to Poland, even where there are clear indications which way the will of the majority of the inhabitants tends.

The German-Polish frontier has not been drawn with a view to reaching a permanent settlement between Germany and Poland, but to facilitating Polish aggression against Germany. Recourse has been had to principles of nationality, economics or history, according to the requirements of the particular case, in order to bring about a decision in favour of Poland, whereas if any one of these principles can be alleged in Germany's favour, no attention is ever paid to *it*.

Point Fourteen.

'*A general association of nations* must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.'

To-day no Concert of the Nations exists. Germany is excluded. The present organization of the League of Nations puts the fate of the world in the hands of the Allied and Associated Governments, which have in the last six months proved their unworthiness to be the *sole* guardians of the interests of humanity by their Armistice policy of favouring and furthering civil war, famine, and pestilence, at a moment when by raising the blockade they might have accomplished the greatest work of healing known to history.

Thus the Agreement of the Fourteen Points has been broken in the spirit and in the letter. No one any longer seriously asserts that it has been kept. President Wilson's opponents in the Entente countries, who have been jeering at him for years, the representatives of the mob—Horatio Bottomley—the spokesmen of the vested interests which always wanted to shatter Germany's trade, the open supporters of the policy of strategic frontiers—these have

thrown reserve to the winds and are boasting of their triumph over Wilson, are talking of 'the crushing defeat of the Fourteen Points' (*sic*).

Germany is to-day fighting for more than simply *its own rights*. If we continue to plead our case honestly, without making the slightest attempt to wrest the agreed legal basis of the negotiations to our advantage, then we are pleading the case of humanity.

Europe is irrevocably doomed to chaos, if once this Treaty is put into execution. This Treaty does not bring Peace, but a permanent state of war.

When a few weeks ago Peace seemed to be near and with it the prospect of sufficient food for our sick and hungry people, there arose something like a hope that Germany might be the first nation to attain to the 'class peace,' thanks to great sacrifices on the part of the possessing classes and the reawakening national sentiment on the part of the workers. If the Treaty of Versailles now comes in place of Peace, then the 15,000,000 who will be 'de trop' (*sic*) in Germany cannot be expected simply to die out quietly, and thus if Germany's fetters are not broken, we shall experience a fratricidal struggle more terrible than all that War and Armistice have brought upon us.

The newly-created Poland too would become the theatre of an uninterrupted struggle for liberation.

Even should the inconceivable happen and a German Government be found ready to give up Upper Silesia or East Prussia or West Prussia, these German territories would not be willing to give up Germany.

To establish by force a Polish Imperialism as planned by the Entente, means doing a great wrong even to the Poles themselves, who would be able to administer a National State but are not equal to the task of ruling one composed of heterogeneous nationalities.

The Poles are unscrupulous guardians of the national minorities entrusted to their care—to-day just as much as in the days of the Polish Republic. I need only refer to the news of Polish pogroms which is now appearing daily in the

English Press, in particular to the report of the American Food Expert, Mr. Zuckermann (*Manchester Guardian* of 9th May) on the Massacre at Pinsk which was furthered by the local authorities and condoned by the Government.

To put the Peace Treaty into execution means moving the frontier of the Balkans and of the pogrom-countries further west.

II

There is probably not a single conscientious and well-informed person in the whole civilised world, who, if the question were put to him as to which is the more genuine fulfilment of the Wilson programme, the *Versailles Treaty or the German counter-proposals*, would be in doubt as to his answer.

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was right in stating at once the furthest limit to which we could go in concession, instead of waiting for these concessions to be wrung from him according to the methods of the old diplomacy.

We ought not to deceive ourselves as to the terrible sacrifices which our counter-proposals lay upon us. They mean the shattering of the proud hopes which as a rising people we cherished throughout the last few decades before the war. But we can sign this counter-proposal and still live on as a nation.

It must not be forgotten that our readiness to bear these enormous financial burdens depends on our being allowed to retain our colonies and to carry on maritime trade, on our not suffering any diminution of territory over and above that provided for in the Fourteen Points.

I regard a return to the Wilson programme as possible even to-day. In the first place there are indisputable signs at Versailles of a movement in this direction. The foreign Press leaves no room for doubt on this point.

The enemy delegations must have suffered a severe shock when the Treaty was submitted to them for the first time as a whole. The Press report that Count Brockdorff-Rantzau

was the first to read the Treaty through from cover to cover is almost credible.

The Peace Conference had evidently split up into various departments. These have been called the *Torture Chambers*. One of them was to deal with Germany's territory, another with her finances, a third with her industry. It cannot be denied that each of these Chambers has performed its task with an astonishing thoroughness. But there was an evident lack of any guiding hand to establish co-ordination between the various departments. Thus it appears that the group of vested interests whose business it was to ' punish ' Germany for her economic progress before the war, was out of touch with the Finance Commission which had the task of determining how German resources could be used to restore the French finances.

In fact when one reads this Treaty straight through, clause after clause, the first effect is that one's common sense rises in revolt. The numerous resignations which have been sent in by members of the enemy delegation are due certainly to moral scruples as well as in part to a simple conviction that such a treaty cannot be executed.

Further, a number of the territorial provisions can only have received the sanction of the enemy Peace Delegation on the ground of the falsified material as to population conditions in Europe which has been presented to them.

It is for instance inconceivable that President Wilson could have given his assent to the solution proposed for West Prussia, Danzig, East Prussia, the Netze District and Upper Silesia, had the inhabitants of the territories in question been heard. But the state of things at the Court of the Big Four can only be compared to that obtaining at the courts of unenlightened despots. They were surrounded by a throng of petition-mongers and favourites, representatives of greedy client peoples ; and in the atmosphere of Paris these were in a position to get their falsehoods believed.

After the Peace Treaty was handed to us the voice of the peoples whose oppression had been planned could no longer be kept from the Big Four. I refer in particular to the

telegrams that have appeared in the *Daily Chronicle*, a paper connected with Lloyd George, describing the imposing popular movement in Upper Silesia.

But we must not give way to illusions. These scruples of conscience which are stirring at Versailles, this new recognition of facts, are not in themselves strong enough to prepare the way for a return to the Wilson programme.

This six months' conclave has not only laid half of Europe waste, but also used up the men who have been working on there in secret. The decisions of tired men follow the line of least resistance. That means, that if the enemy delegation saw their way to get the signature of the German delegation to a Peace Treaty that had not been altered in its essentials, by means of an Ultimatum with a short time-limit, they would put such an ultimatum.

And if the enemy delegation in Versailles sees their way, after such ultimatum has been rejected, to extort any kind of German signature by the forcible means they have at their disposal, then they will employ such forcible means—assuming that their peoples are still willing to entrust them with the necessary force.

Here we get down to the heart of the international situation.

What does public opinion in enemy countries want? How strong is the pressure which it exerts on the delegation?

Of one thing there can be no question—since the handing over of the Peace Treaty, a revulsion of feeling among the peoples has begun.

To use President Wilson's words, the Tribunal of Humanity has given its verdict.

'We are to be duped' is no longer the cry of the German people alone. That is what millions of neutrals are saying too—neutrals who in their inmost heart had given up their neutrality and wished the Allies success, believing as they did that America had the power not merely to win the victory but also to prevent its abuse. That is what the kin of the hundreds of thousands in enemy countries who gave their lives for a 'clean peace' (*sic*) are saying to-day.

In America too the disappointment is of course great.

But in face of the pressure of jingo passion the so-called Wilson Liberals do not feel themselves strong enough to force a revision of the Versailles Treaty. Rather they seem inclined to join forces with the Republicans and relapse into the Monroe Doctrine. ' We are sick of Europe ' is the ever-recurring theme of the Senate debates. It is not impossible that Republicans and the protagonists of a Wilson Peace will combine to bring about the rejection of the Draft Covenant of the League of Nations and of America's guarantee for the enforcement of the Peace Treaty—the Liberals on the ground that, after Wilson's signal defeat at the hands of European Diplomacy, America can do nothing better than withdraw completely from European affairs.

Nor is it to be expected that the awakening of the international conscience will rouse any considerable popular opposition to the Versailles Treaty in France. The internal problems of that country are at the moment the only thing that can give its Government pause.

The key to the situation lies in English public opinion. There important re-groupings are in progress. The following account is based on the Press reports of the ' Heidelberg Association ' :

1. The last four by-elections to the English Parliament, which all of them turned out badly for the Government, are a sign that people are getting over the psychosis of the Khaki Election. The success of Commander Kenworthy, won in a constituency (East Hull) that had been Conservative for thirty years, is particularly significant. Lloyd George's breach with Northcliffe is a concession to the results of these by-elections. He is trying to get into touch with the Left, and to postpone all by-elections for the present.

2. The Liberal Opposition, which as the result of these by-elections has gained an importance out of all proportion to its numbers in Parliament, has given up the attitude of reserve, which characterized its foreign policy up to now, and has taken up a position condemning the Versailles Treaty on principle. It has up to now refused to draw the decisive consequences of this position. True to Asquith's

policy of 'Wait and See,' it contents itself with subjecting particular provisions to a severe criticism, and with urging the Government to revise the Treaty, and Germany to trust to its being later revised by the League of Nations and sign it.

3. A considerable group of Independent Liberals, men whose voices were always raised to demand an energetic prosecution of the war, are to-day conducting a keen campaign against the Treaty. One of them, Gilbert Murray, was perhaps England's best propagandist during the war, and helped as few others did to lay the doubts that kept rising in the mind of the English people as to the righteousness of the English cause. Further, the case of the *New Statesman* must be mentioned—a paper whose attitude to Germany during the war was one of extreme malice and unfairness. To-day it is urging Germany to insist on those amendments to the Treaty on which the hopes of the allied democracies are centred.

4. English financial experts of various parties declare the demands put to us to be incapable of fulfilment.

5. As far as the workers are concerned—the avowed pacifists led by Ramsay Macdonald and Snowden of course hope that we shall refuse to sign ; there is nothing surprising in their attitude. The National Executive of the Labour Party, which consists in great part of elements like Henderson, etc., who loyally supported the war, refuses to take any responsibility for the Peace Treaty. But it too has up to now not been able to make up its mind to use the Versailles Treaty as jumping-off ground for a general offensive against the Government. Important too is the attitude of Smillie, the President of the Miners' Federation. In his speech at the Albert Hall against ' the Blockade as a means of enforcing Intolerable Conditions,' he made a great impression on his audience and on the country at large. (' I shall be ashamed to show my face before the German workers, after my country has been starving their wives and children.') Smillie is the dominant personality in the Triple Alliance of Miners, Railwaymen, and Transport Workers. He is to-day the

strongest man in the English Labour Movement, and has several times refused the offer of a seat in the Government.

6. The voices which are being raised in British army circles against the blockade are growing more numerous. Commander Kenworthy asserted that he was but voicing the feelings of the fighting men, in saying as he did that having to take part in maintaining the blockade had made him feel ashamed of his uniform. This is corroborated by General Plumer's telegram, which at the time enabled Lloyd George to put through the first imports of foodstuffs to Germany.

7. A serious opposition to the Peace Treaty on the part of the Imperialists is making itself heard. It takes roughly the following line :

' The Fourteen Points may be utter nonsense, but we have accepted them, and the British Empire cannot afford to break its word.' This is political Realism. There is discontent and disaffection to be found in all the corners of the British Empire. England can overcome the difficulties it is faced with in Ireland, India, and Egypt, in Canada and South Africa, if it puts its ' claim to leadership ' upon an unimpeachable moral basis—and only if it does this. ' We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too ' —all this by itself is to-day insufficient to sustain British Imperialism. Her good name is as necessary to England as her ships. To let the Treaty of Versailles become a reality, is to put a dangerous weapon into the hands of Great Britain's own disaffected subject peoples ; ' England will treat us,' they will be saying, ' as it treated its European enemy.' In this war ideas of international honour have been established and no world power can disregard them with impunity. (Compare Lord Grey's words of warning, uttered in 1916 : ' We should break down under the hatred of a hostile world.')

Thus the return to the Fourteen Points is demanded by the self-preserving instincts of British Imperialism.

The great question at issue is, *how strong are these forces* which to-day are being marshalled against the Versailles

Treaty in enemy countries? Can they put through the decisive amendments in time?

We answer: The strength of the opposition to the Peace Treaty *depends primarily on Germany*. The Opposition to the Peace Treaty is to-day working under a heavy handicap; false reports are daily being spread abroad in England as to differences of opinion that have arisen within the German Delegation, or between the Delegation and the Government, as to the readiness of this or that Minister to form a new Cabinet which would undertake to sign the Treaty. The Press correspondents daily feel the pulse of German public opinion and *report every observation they make of fluctuation or feebleness*.

Under these circumstances the opponents of the Treaty in the Entente countries fight shy of the responsibility of encouraging Germany to refuse her signature, thus delaying the conclusion of Peace.

First we must succeed in impressing on the public opinion of the world the conviction that Germany will muster up the necessary strength to *refuse her signature and take the consequences*; not till then will it come to a political trial of strength between the opponents and the supporters of the Treaty.

The issue of this trial of strength is doubtful. It is possible that public opinion will compel a return to the Wilson programme. But Germany would do well to reckon with the possibility of Northcliffe, the vested interests, and the mob once more gaining the day, and the hatred of the English people still sufficing to bring about the march to Berlin, the maintenance of the blockade, and the like.

In that case we are bound to conclude that, if the Treaty is really to be forced on us, we shall do well to put the enemy in the position of *having to draw the last inhuman consequences of their present frame of mind*. In that case we must not spare them the dishonour of having to set their troops in motion and fall upon an unresisting people with bombs and famine, all for the sake of overthrowing the Wilson peace and enforcing the Versailles peace of revenge. This would be

for our enemies the greatest moral defeat in their history. The spontaneous movements in enemy countries, which to-day are being reported from all quarters, would get the upper hand, and the responsible Governments of the Entente would very soon collapse. Then the way would be clear for a speedy and thorough revision of Versailles Treaty.

It is true fresh sufferings would be laid upon Germany, but this time of trial would probably be quite short.

Here the objection may be made that revision will soon come, *even if Germany signs*. There is a mistake in the calculation here. On the conclusion of peace the victors will first of all be occupied in celebrations and festivities, and after that their own internal problems will absorb all the available energy of the peoples. The interest shown in England for Germany will be extremely slight. The sufferings of the German people will certainly get a mention in the Liberal Press—in the sentimental column, along with the propaganda against Vivisection and in favour of Albania. But there will be no demand on the part of public opinion for the statesmanlike effort necessary to save and reorganize Europe. And such a demand is the only thing that really counts.

It is true revision of the Peace Treaty would be bound to come, even after signature ; but it would come piecemeal and haphazard. On every hand the oppressed would break loose from their chains. Europe would become a chaos of national and social upheaval.

Disappointed America is to-day proclaiming to the world : ' European civilization deserves to die ! '

It is Europe's task to make a stand at the eleventh hour, and when America fails it, to catch up the quenched torch and set it once more alight.

To sum up :

In the first place, the genuine Wilson peace is not yet beyond our reach, even to-day.

Secondly, in the ranks of the enemy peoples the opposition to the Versailles Treaty is strong—under certain circumstances strong enough to make a timely and adequate revision of it possible.

Thirdly, the pressure in favour of revision will be the stronger *the more convincing the signs Germany gives of her determination only to sign a Treaty which she can carry out and which can be defended on grounds of Law and Equity.*

Fourthly, Germany must reckon with the likelihood that, after making insufficient concessions, the enemy will then put an *Ultimatum* threatening a ruthless employment of their various means of pressure.

Fifthly, the refusal of our signature remains even in that case our sole hope in the task of obtaining a speedy revision of the Treaty.

If we throw up the struggle to get justice done, *let us not imagine that others will carry it on on our behalf.* But should Germany for a short while more show its determination to take upon itself fresh sufferings rather than put its name to the Perjury of Versailles, then in every land *allies* in a force we had not dreamed of will rise up in the cause of Justice.

So we shall regain the world's respect which we had lost. This is the only way of deliverance, and we must take it.

APPENDIX VI

(p. 192)

GENERAL VON HAEFTEN'S REPORT

After the reception of Wilson's Note of 24th October I made my report to the Chancellor between 10-30 and 11 a.m. to the following effect :

Wilson's Note and the view expressed in Noske's speech that the Kaiser's abdication would be necessary if we were to obtain favourable peace conditions had given rise to a serious crisis. The Kaiser was now called upon to take a momentous decision—for voluntary abdication or a fight for his Crown. In case the Kaiser should be willing to abdicate, the official publication of Wilson's Note would have to be held up to enable the Kaiser to renounce his throne on his own initiative. An abdication under pressure from the Social Democrats was out of the question. If, however, the Kaiser should decide to fight for his Crown, the decision to break off negotiations and to fight on to the bitter end, must be made known to the public, simultaneously with Wilson's Note. I implored the Prince [1] to give his support to the latter solution. In my telephone report to him which immediately followed at 11.15 a.m., General Ludendorff had denounced Wilson's demand, which meant driving away the Kaiser before the peace negotiations and so making the Army incapable of further resistance, as an intolerable humiliation. The Kaiser's abdication, he said, was quite out of the question ; there was only one solution, that of breaking with Wilson and fighting on to the last. The army was ready to fight to a finish for its Supreme War Lord. I asked the

[1] Haeften's sheet of notes on which the above report is based, contain the passage : ' Implore Chancellor, reject abdication decision, continuation of the struggle. . . . '

General to come as soon as possible with the Field-Marshal to Berlin. When I told Prince Max of this, he requested the two Generals through me to put off their journey to Berlin until he should summon them. This General Ludendorff refused to do, adding that he should arrive in Berlin next day to report to the Kaiser on the military situation. All this I passed on to the Prince.

At an intimate discussion which took place at the Foreign Office about midday I gave decidedly spirited expression to this view of General Ludendorff's without, however, directly referring to him. My remarks culminated in a demand for the breaking-off of negotiations and the continuance of the struggle. Further negotiations must inevitably lead in the end to ' the overthrow of the Monarchy which would leave the German people defenceless.' Hereupon a representative of the War Press Bureau who was present at the discussion immediately sent to the Supreme Command a report which was evidently the result of a misunderstanding, since it treated my utterances as an official declaration of the Cabinet in favour of breaking off and fighting on. Thus the Field-Marshal and General Ludendorff, in issuing the much discussed Army Order calling on the Army to ' resist to the utmost,' believed themselves to be in full agreement with the Government. . . .

On the afternoon of 25th October, soon after the arrival of the Field-Marshal and General Ludendorff in Berlin, I made my report at the buildings of the General Staff, in the presence of Admiral Scheer and General von Winterfeldt. At that time the Cabinet had still not reached any final conclusion as regards the answer to be given to Wilson's Note ; it seemed, however, as if the party in the Cabinet in favour of further negotiations with Wilson was gaining ground. I opposed this view by once more urging the necessity of a speedy decision in favour of breaking-off negotiations. Should the conversation with the Vice-Chancellor, Herr von Payer, which had been arranged for that evening, fail to bring a decision in this sense, it would be necessary for the Field-Marshal and General Ludendorff to

hand in their resignation in order to force the Kaiser to take up a determined stand at once—since there was no time to be lost. In a lightning flash the overwhelming dangers of a situation strained to the breaking point had been illuminated by Noske's utterance as to the necessity of the Kaiser's abdication for the conclusion of a good peace. As soon as I had finished, General Ludendorff made his report to the Field-Marshal in the same sense. He said he was determined, should the Cabinet be for further negotiations with Wilson, to hand in his resignation to the Kaiser. The Field-Marshal reserved his decision. At the end of the fruitless conversation with the Vice-Chancellor that night General Ludendorff told me as he left the room that he should send in his resignation next day. About the same time the Kaiser, on the advice of the Imperial Chancellor, had already made up his mind to dismiss him. . . .

. . . . . .

The last step I took in the question of abdication was the report made on 3rd November at the Chancellor's bedside. I urged on the Prince that it was now high time to bring the question of abdication to a head. I told him that as a future Federal Prince and as an officer he ought in no case to ' force the Kaiser to abdicate.' He had fulfilled his duty as Chancellor now that he had informed the Kaiser in the frankest possible terms of the seriousness of the situation. He must now require of the members of the Cabinet, the Reichstag Majority, and the Press, that they should give up their demand for abdication. In case they rejected this request, he must resign. In giving this advice I was decisively influenced by the opinion of the doctor in charge as to the seriousness of the relapse which had taken place in the Prince's influenza. This, too, was what led me on 2nd November to take steps to induce the Vice-Chancellor, Herr von Payer, to sign a telegram informing the public of the Chancellor's grave state of health, and announcing that the Vice-Chancellor had taken over the conduct of affairs for the time being.

(Signed) VON HAEFTEN,
Major-General (*Retired*).

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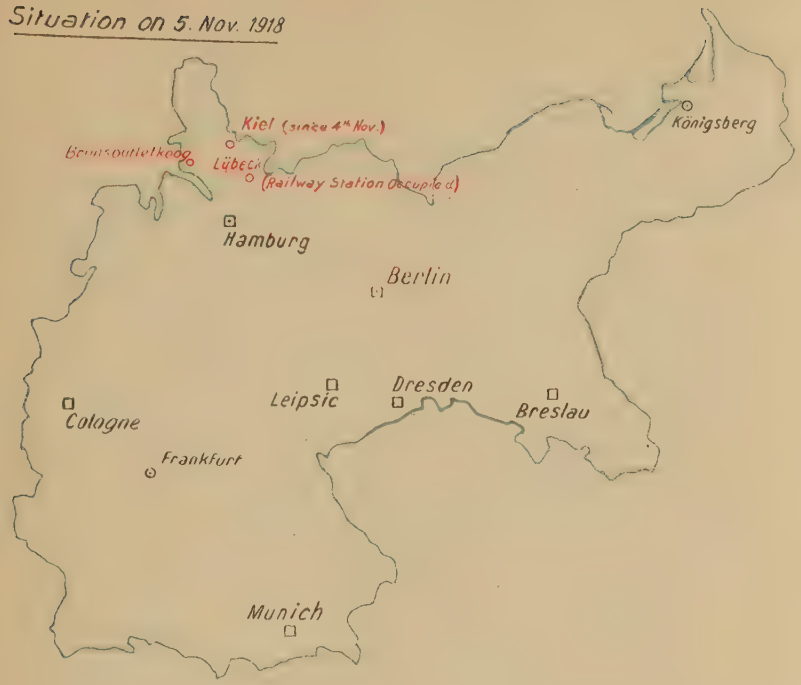
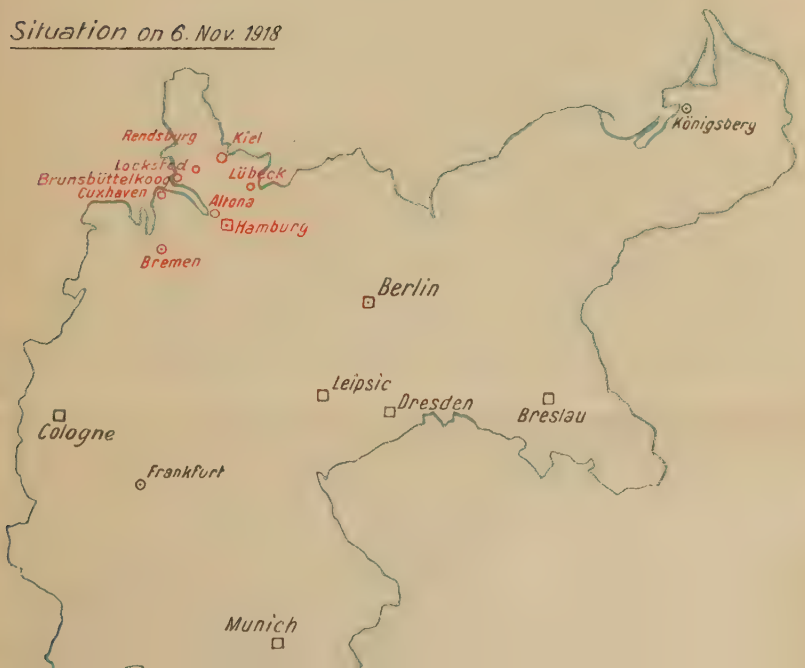


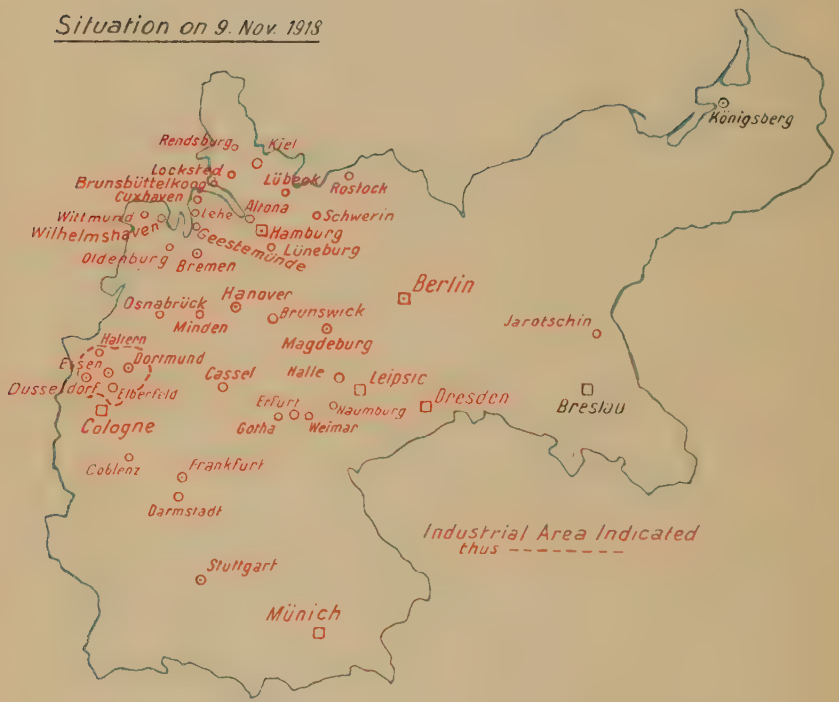
Situation on 7. Nov. 1918

Situation on 6. Nov. 1918



Situation on 8. Nov. 1918

THE SPREADING OF THE REVOLUTION IN GERMANY



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